

THE
CHILD
OF
NATURE,

IMPROVED BY CHANCE.

A Philosophical Novel.

By Mr. HELVETIUS.

VOL. II.

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THE
CHILD of NATURE,
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CHAP. XXXV.

I Set out the next day in the Derby machine. A clergyman was my fellow-traveller; a clergyman! What language could I talk to such a man? As civility required him to begin the conversation, I held my tongue, in expectation he would not make me long wait for it. In the mean time I surveyed him clandestinely from head to foot. He was ele-

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gently

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gantly shaped, but not handsome. His eyes had the fire of youth—there was wit in his countenance, and sensibility in his features; but he had so much of the religious man about him, that Nature seemed to have only the secondary place in his heart. Whenever my looks glanced upon him, a blush enlivened his cheek. We sat next to one another; but though there was room enough for three, he squeezed himself up in his corner, as if I were infected with an epidemical distemper. We rode two miles as modern married people do, looking different ways. At last, my vanity offended, made me break the silence.

“I hope, Sir, you are not dumb.”

He looked at me with surprise and severity.

“I am not, Miss.”

“I was afraid you were.”

He

He turned his head with a frown—and our conversation ended.

“What a dull animal have I got here! he will neither talk nor look—That man, sure, is not fond of a pretty face—I must divert myself at his expence, since he will not amuse himself at mine.”

“May I presume to ask, Sir, how long I am to be favoured with so agreeable a companion.”

“Your wit, Miss, is no disgrace to me—I hate to talk upon trifles.”

“Do you think, Sir, that trifles are the only wit of a woman?”

“What I think, Miss, is of no consequence.”

“Your modesty, Sir, is not an apology for your reproach of my sex.”

“I am sorry for it, I have no other to make.”

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"Does the clergyman preclude the character of a gentleman?"

"I do not understand you; what do you mean?"

"I mean, Sir, that to the severity of a clergyman's morals, you ought to add the behaviour of a gentleman. Why do you refuse to do justice to women?"

"What does it matter, whether I be right or wrong in my opinion of them?"

"It is, undoubtedly, of no matter to me—But is there any glory in being thought ridiculous, or a fool? Were you a bishop, you might indulge your spleen against any species, male or female, that would not please your fancy; but you are a young clergyman, probably in want of preferment. The spleen of the bishop might be mistaken for wisdom—in you, Sir, it is the characteristic of folly. I imagine

imagine it is not with such characteristics that clergymen are promoted in this age."

"God forbid I should ever be indebted to hypocrisy for my promotion in the church! No woman shall ever boast I have courted her protection."

"If you are not rich, you are certainly in a fair way of starving—Is it at Oxford, or at Cambridge, you have formed the heroic resolution of depending upon your virtue only, for the interest of persons in power? As, I suppose, you have not the ambition of being an original, you have very likely found in those universities examples to confirm your expectations."

"You would be a wit, Miss."

"I, Sir! not I, indeed! I am but a woman—I can talk only upon trifles."

"Your trifles, Miss, have too much of the sarcastical turn—It does not become

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a woman to break a jest upon objects she ought to respect."

"Be consistent with yourself, Sir,—either give me leave to be a trifler, or suffer me to appear a woman of sense. What part will you have me to perform?"

"Neither."

And he put his head out of the coach.

"The brute!" was I going to exclaim.

"Now, Sir, I have discovered the cause of your prejudice against women—Pray, Sir,——"

And I took him by the sleeve.

"Tell me whether I am right."

"And so, Miss, you will not let your tongue rest."

"No, till I have made you a friend to my sex."

"Do not flatter yourself that you shall have that honour."

"Is

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"Is then your contempt of them so deeply rooted?"

"May be."

"You will certainly listen to reason."

"May be."

"I admire the wit and the pertinence of your repartees. Where the deuce have you got that brilliant and happy *may be*?"

"Fye, Miss, you swear."

"My *deuce* keeps your *may be* in countenance: they are made one for another."

"Foolish girl!"

He burst into laughter.

"Witty man!"

And I ecchoed his ha! ha! ha!

"You are absolutely determined, Miss, to torment my ears with your idle tittle-tattle."

"I am—And to convince you of it, I will return to the subject from which your

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may be diverted me. Your prejudices against my sex, proceed from the ill usage you have met with from some of them—You have been in love!”

“I in love! If you repeat the word, I will call to the coachman, and leave you.”

“Then call him; for I will repeat it, You have been in love. Nay, I will say more—You have not been loved—and that is the real cause of your injustice to women.”

“Miss, you are im——”

He stopped, and darted such a look—

“Come, Sir, I will speak the word you are ashamed to pronounce—Impudence—Is it not it?”

“I am glad you have understood me.”

“I am impudent for telling you, you have not been loved. What! have you
some

some vanity about you? Well, upon my word, I did not think that was a passion a religious clergyman could indulge. Every day I am taught something new."

"Good God! how she talks. Miss, what happy family are you going to visit?"

"Mrs. P——'s, at Ash——. Are you going so far?"

"Not quite."

"You are, perhaps, curate of the parish."

"No."

And he betrayed an indignation at the question I made.—O vanity! vanity!

"That man, sure, is an hypocrite," said I to myself, "since he is tainted with the vice of vanity."

"I will trouble you, Sir, with but one question more—Who are you?"

"Chaplain to Lord M——."

"I thought that monkeys had long ago been substituted for clergymen, in the houses of noblemen—Are they not in fashion at Lord M——'s?"

"Lord! lord! lord!"

It was lucky that the coach stopped; for I believe he would have leaped out of it, at the risk of falling under the wheels.

"Coachman! coachman!" cried he, with the accent of a man surrounded by thieves or murderers.

"Are you mad, Sir? beware of an imprudence that may cause you to repent—The reputation of a virtuous woman is not to be the victim of your whims."

"You a virtuous woman!"

How readily these devotees challenge the virtue of women!

"Thought

"Though my pretensions to that name, Sir, are more humble than yours, I believe, however, they are better founded—you see me such as I am—I am afraid I see you the reverse of what you are."

He shrugged up his shoulders with contempt.

The coachman came—my religious companion said he had forgot what he wanted him for.

I smiled.

"Bring a glass of Lisbon," said I to the coachman—"Shall I, Sir, treat you with a glass?"

No answer.

"Pray, Sir, do not you call a lie your reply to the coachman?"

"You made it necessary, Miss."

"And so religion approves of a neces-

fary lie—I did not know that before.—
 You have better qualities than, at first, I
 thought you were endowed with—you are
 vain, and can sport with truth!—that is
 sufficient to make you prosper in the
 world. Come, away with your hypocri-
 tical looks—you will reassume them again,
 when you come at Lord M——’s. They
 can no longer serve you with me.”

The smile, and the look, which accom-
 panied my words, demanded the sacrifice
 of his countenance—he made it.

“It would avail me nothing to be angry
 at your impertinence—I will indulge it—
 talk—from this to Kegworth, I will put
 off the character of a clergyman.”

“Are you in earnest?”

“I am.”

“Now that you have deprived me of
 the

the temptation that made me talk, I have absolutely nothing to say to you."

"True woman, by all that is good!"

I warbled a tune, and affected to take no notice of him.

C H A P. XXXVI.

WHAT patience were I not armed with, to suffer the impertinence of that man, and to change him from the man of religion into the man of Nature. It was now my moment to return him the compliment of indifference. Upon that behaviour only I could depend upon a complete triumph over him. Why did my vanity pant after a triumph over that man? Why did that vanity, without the help of my heart, mark my deportment with the desire of pleasing? Women! his contempt of you, and the offensive singularity of his conduct towards me, were the causes of that vanity and desire. Had he acted the man of gallantry, he might have given me a dislike to him. In
the

the company of a young man, and not to have a poor compliment paid to my charms! Not to be esteemed an object worthy of his attention and respect! Was that an injury my pride could forgive? Was I not lovely in his eyes? He talked of religion and virtue, when I attempted to make him forgetful of them! If this was not provoking, I do not know what can justly be called so. Young women, yet untaught by experience, beware of the insensibility of men! it is one of the destructive means employed against your innocence; and, perhaps, the only one you are not able to oppose, or to conquer. The man who loves you, is not so dangerous to your virtue, as the man who, by his indifference, speaks the satire of your beauty. It is not what we have,

but

but what we have not, that can make us happy. Like the ambitious man, who disdains what he possesses, to chase what is denied him; we commonly scorn the lover we have fixed in our train, for the man who dares to defy our power, and stand in defence of his liberty. What advantages unknown to us, does not get a man acquainted with the female heart? All our passions are at his command; he may work them at his pleasure. We are, in his hands, a piece of mechanism, whose motions he regulates as his fancy bids.— Luckily for us, such men have not always the patience requisite to finish the plan they have designed.— Luckily for us, a passion restores us often to our reason, at the very minute we had taken leave of it.

Since

“Since the clergyman did not love me, I was tempted to love him.—Prudes, silence! I do not write for you.”

I was still warbling the tune, when the clergyman begged to know whether there were any consistency in my behaviour.

I did not answer.

“I will not, Miss, presume to excuse my conduct—it was rude, and unbecoming a gentleman—I ought to have left my character behind, and——”

He stopped.

“And have rather been guilty of a breach of decorum, than of a breach of manners—You are the first woman who made me so feelingly sensible of my folly.”

“What! you have also the true spirit of satire! with that talent you cannot fail to prosper.”

“Do

“Do not descry in my words a meaning I did not intend to give them—your wit has performed a miracle, which your good sense, perhaps, would not have operated.”

“Charmingly spoken, upon my honour!—Pray go on, Sir,—a few more of these flattering compliments—I neither can nor will dispute with you, the glory of the best jest.”

“Can there be any jest in truth? Ten philosophical reflections could not, so soon, be the death of ridicule, as a smart repartee. Judge me not, Miss, from my past behaviour to you.”

“What I think, Sir, is of no consequence.”

“Your answer might be more obliging.”

“I am sorry for it—I have no other to make.”

“Does

"Does my offence intitle you to resent it?"

"I do not understand you—What do you mean?"

"I have taught you that language—you return it upon me—I will not complain."

Then he squeezed himself again in his corner, and was so bold as to warble the very tune I had amused myself with. I was piqued—my spite was nigh appearing in my looks. "The fellow!" exclaimed I inwardly—he fears my wit, more than he loves my person.—Out of respect for himself, he attempted an apology—that I might forget his foolish behaviour, and not turn him into ridicule, he condescended to bribe my vanity, with the appearance of a desire of my pardon. I fancied that sensibility was the cause of
the

the alteration in his conduct—That he talked to please—That he could no longer deny his sensibility the enjoyment of the delightful emotions my charms had involuntarily raised in his breast. It was a dream of my vanity; yet his accents were so tender, so expressive of the language of the heart!—He may dissemble his feelings, to avoid the shame of declaring them in vain.—A clergyman, though a rake in his heart, has the dignity of his profession to support—He would not expose his foible, at the hazard of its being laughed at. But is not modesty to me, what the dignity of his profession is to him? He is a man—if he loves me, he will talk—if he does not, “God have mercy upon me.”

We remained half an hour silent, musing, very likely, upon the same subject.

The

The religious man was no longer in the countenance of my companion. Ten times he turned his head towards me, and opened his lips, as often my disdainful mien closed them again. At last, he grew impatient.

“The esteem, Miss, of a woman of your exquisite wit and understanding, is a felicity I beg you would grant me.—Your dress is so equivocal, that, at first sight, I did not know what class among women you belonged to: the virtuous and the libertine have an equal pretension to it. You began the conversation in a manner which disagreed with my character, and the decency of a discreet woman—it was no encouragement for a man who is tender of his honour and reputation. To spare myself the trouble of partaking in your garrulity, I put on the only
looks

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looks that could free me from it. My mask, far from frightening you, added to your sprightliness—Wit graced your jests—In spite of myself I was pleased, tho', at the same time, I shewed you the greatest contempt. The decency of your manners, the delicacy of your expressions, have forced me to repent the injustice I did you, and to divest myself of the borrowed character I had assumed."

"What a Proteus you are! how naturally you acted the bigot! how readily you play every part you chuse to perform! such a flexibility in your character, does not encourage a confidence in you—I pity the woman whom love will tempt to have a faith in your sincerity."

"Have you not told me I never was loved?"

"I have not told you that you would not be so."

"I am resolved not to try the experiment. Women are generally so false."

"Men are generally so inconstant, that I have formed the same resolution you have."

"There are exceptions."

"Undoubtedly there are; but what man will not be an exception to the general rule? You would not, I imagine, be comprehended in it."

"No, certainly, since I do not deserve that disgrace."

"Well, that is the language of all men—hear them—they are all honest, sincere, constant. Have they pleased? they immediately offer the contrast of the picture they had drawn of themselves."

"A woman of sense distinguishes easily

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sily between the impostor and the man of honour."

"A woman of sense in love cannot make such a distinction; she is then the slave of her senses, and is feeding upon errors."

"A man betrays himself in his behaviour."

"To the eye of the indifferent, Yes—to that of his mistress, No. We seldom see faults in the objects we like.—Love is like modern painters—flattering—never painting to the life."

"I know not which to admire the most, whether your charms or your wit."

"Oh, Sir, your most humble servant—truce with your gallantry—I am not disposed to listen to it.—Never will I love—or be loved."

"As women are to me, what men are

to

to you, I will persevere in the same resolution."

"Let it be so—What fine weather!—Are we far from Kegworth?"

"No, Miss, we are in sight of it."

A few minutes after we stopped at the George.

"I will force thee to recant," said I to myself, as he helped me out of the coach. I looked for the same thought in his eyes—Alas! I only descried indifference in them.

C H A P. XXXVII.

WE found at the inn, three men and a woman, who had taken places in the machine.

“ Miss,” said the clergyman, “ I hate a dinner, which cannot satisfy our appetite, but at the expence of our taste. It is yet very early—there are but twelve miles from this to Ash—have you any objection to a dinner by ourselves, and to a post-chaise to Mrs. P——s ?”

“ Not the least, Sir ; especially when I am to be with a man, who has sworn an enmity to love.”

“ We have no need of his company to be happy.”

“ It is my opinion—Pray bespeak the dinner ; I’ll wait for you in this parlour.”

I went

I went to the glass, muttering, "No need of love to be happy—" The glass, as usual, told me I was lovely, and I was really the more so, as my companion was obstinately bent on refusing to do me justice. I took off my cloak, which murdered the graces of my shape, and threw so carelessly a gauze over my bosom, that it was rather an enticement to the eye, than an obstacle to it.

The clergyman found me at the glass; he sat upon the corner of a table, that stood between it and me.

"What a shape! What a——"

His eyes uttered the word bosom.

"Sir, since you will not love, you must not flatter."

"I can certainly praise what I admire; it is an homage the most indifferent man is obliged to pay."

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“It is an homage an indifferent woman will not receive. My person does not deserve a compliment.”

“It does indeed ! and I will pay it.”

“You will ? Well, let me hear then, how a clergyman can express himself upon the subject. I think that, without love, a man can neither be eloquent, nor entertaining upon it. Would not that man be ridiculous, who, not being a connoisseur, should talk of painting—who, having no taste, should talk of music ? You are that man—believe me. Seek for a subject more adapted to your wit.”

“You are right ; my praise would want that energy, a lover only can give. Yet—”

“Do not attempt what you cannot execute. Should you prove an insignificant orator, I would heartily laugh at you.”

He

He passed his arms round my waist, and presumed to give me a kiss.

“That manner of praising, Sir, does not become you—a clergyman, who talked so much of virtue.”

“The past ought to be forgotten.”

“That cannot be, when the present forces it upon my mind. I wonder how a man can give a kiss to a woman he does not love—how a clergyman especially, can, so wantonly, alarm the modesty of a young woman!”

“Like you, I wonder how that happens.”

“It is foolish enough.”

“Nothing can be more so.—What wine do you chuse to drink?”

“White port.”

He rang the bell. A bottle was brought.—He helped me to a glass.

"To——"

He hesitated.

"To what, Sir?"

"To the pleasures of indifference."

I pledged him.—He walked in the parlour.

"I have seen handsomer women than you."

I smiled.

"I make no doubt of it, Sir."

"But never one so agreeable and lovely."

"I dropped a curtsy.—He sighed and said—

"Do you know what love is."

"I wish you would give me a description of it—I know nothing of the matter."

"Nor I."

And he walked again.

"Wit, united to beauty, is a great seducer."

"Merit,

"Merit, in an amiable man, is not less dangerous."

"Have you ever met with such a man?"

"Have you ever met with such a woman?"

"Your curiosity I cannot gratify."

"Your question I cannot answer."

"Your name?"

And he attempted in vain to stifle a sigh.

"Fanny Ramfay. Yours?"

"William Wobby."

A few minutes silence—a look, now and then, on both sides, which signified something, and nothing.

"You have an extremely pretty hand. Such a little tempting foot I never saw in my life."

"Have you not, really?"

And I burst into laughter.

C 4 "Pray

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“ Pray—remember you are a clergyman, and that you are resolved not to love.”

“ If you will have me remember it, do not make me forget it.”

“ Where have you learned so much gallantry ?”

“ With you ; I have had no other master.”

“ You are an apt scholar ; so great a progress in so little a time !”

“ You are an excellent mistress ; no less could I have been taught in the few hours I have been with you.”

And he ventured again one kiss on my lips.

“ Do you call this gallantry ?”

“ The dinner is coming, upon honour. I am glad of it, for I have an excellent appetite.”

“ So have I.”

And we sat down.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

THE last scene pleased me.—Though it had not been conclusive in my favour, I formed great expectations from it. Mr. Wobby had not positively said, “I love you,” but his speech, his looks, his behaviour, had spoken the words. The tongue of a lover is not so expressive as his action. The language of Mr. Wobby was more adapted to my charms, more interesting to my vanity.

“Now,” said I to myself, “I believe I am safe. If he loves me, I will easily get rid of the inclination his indifference has created in my breast. Plague upon that folly of my mind, or heart, which makes me wish for what I cannot obtain, and despise what I have got.” As I knew

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no remedy to the disease, I left to chance to cure, or increase the malignity of it.

Mr. Wobby not eating as a lover, I followed his example. At the desert only, he paid me the compliment of his attention, and I politely returned it.

“Have they not an excellent cook, Miss?”

“They have indeed; I never ate so hearty a dinner in my life.”

“I am almost tempted to write a few verses in his honour.”

“So, you are a poet?”

“Now and then, as an opportunity offers.—Shall I give you a toast?”

“With all my heart.”

“May we enjoy, and never repent.”

“That’s a good wish, Sir; but what pleasures are unattended by repentance?”

“All

"All those, Miss, which reason, taste, or caprice can justify."

"You do not think that the pleasures resulting from vice can be justified by them?"

"No. If by vice you mean the crimes destructive to the happiness of a nation, or of the individuals that compose it; yes, if by it you mean the foibles of Nature."

"Forgive my ignorance; your distinction has a singularity that confuses my understanding. Are there any other vices than those we hold from Nature?"

"The worst, and more dangerous, Miss, come from education, and the inequality among mankind. Nature never made a murderer, a thief, a perjurer, and all the villains we hear of, or meet with. To society only, they owe their existence. Want, pride, ambition, avarice,

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rice, are the causes productive of the crimes that are daily committed; charge not Nature with them."

"What then is the difference between vice and virtue?"

"The same that is between an insult and a compliment, offered by a fool, to a man of sense."

"Your wit is unseasonable—be serious—I will not betray your confidence in me. Tell me, plainly, what virtue is?"

"Virtue is—Should I speak ten years, I could not tell you what it is. So various are the colours it borrows from the characters of men, from religion, from the climate, that I might say it is whatever you will have it to be."

"I will have no such definitions—come—we are alone—be not afraid to talk as you think—What is virtue?"

"It

“It is to vice what light is to darkness—A word that gives the idea of a contrast.”

“A word only?”

“You cannot seriously desire me to answer that question.”

“Is not your scruple ridiculous, after you have ingenuously given me your opinion of vice? I insist again—What is virtue?”

“What shall my reward be for telling it you?”

“My friendship—my esteem.”

“That bribe I accept—but it is not enough; add three kisses to it, and I shall be satisfied.”

“Three kisses from the woman you do not love!”

“No matter; upon that condition only I will talk.”

“Three

“Three kisses from me to you! that is a stupid reward.”

I gave him the three kisses with the dignity of an unfeeling woman; and he returned them with such a fire—I was obliged to put on an angry look.

“Now, Sir, for your opinion of virtue.”

* * * * *

[The Translator has thought proper to omit the reflections of Mr. *Helvetius*. His sentiments upon vice and virtue, the reader will find in his celebrated work of *L'Esprit*.]

* * * * *

“These philosophical sentiments, Miss, seem to encourage immorality; yet you will never see the conduct of a free-thinker influenced by them. Philosophers enlighten the world, and do not disturb

disturb it; among them you will not find the rascals who are a disgrace to society. Our passions, Miss, are the supreme rulers of our manners and behaviour. It is not your opinion of virtue or vice, that will conduct you into the arms of a man, but love, pride, caprice, or curiosity. The practice of the duties prescribed to us, and our deviation from them, have their source in our feelings. You will, Miss, when your heart is forcibly moved, yield to Nature, without the help of your reason."

"Miss! Miss!" that word displeased me. He had talked so sensibly, that, though I were not absolutely in love with his person, I was really so with his wit. A man of his profession, a philosopher! In my favour he had taken off the mask that screened him from the rest of mankind!

kind! How could I repay the compliment? The *bow* would not perhaps have kept me long in suspense, had Mr. Wobby attempted to abuse my gratitude for him. But he looked so careless, so cold, so much like a philosopher, superior to human frailties, that he gave death to my good intention towards him.

"Your confidence in me, Sir, does me honour. This day has been a very happy day to me, since I have obtained your esteem and friendship."

He made a bow—was a bow an answer? How whimsical that man! How different his behaviour from one hour to another!

"It grows late, Sir, will you be pleased to set out?"

"We might stay an hour longer."

"We might, it is true; but—what will

will the people in the house think of my being alone with you?"

"We are both known to them."

"It is true; but—at my age, at yours—they do not know that we have formed the resolution not to love."

"We do not know yet, ourselves, whether we will keep it."

"For that very reason let us go; since you are uncertain, I will not stay with you."

"You would not have me love you?"

"No."

He could find no encouragement in that No.

"Should I tempt you to love me?"—

"Then I should be glad to be loved by you."

"Shall we rescind our resolution?"

"What! without temptation? with-

out

out any cause? That would be childish to the last degree."

"You are right, I'll go and order a post-chaise."

What would women in my situation have thought of that man? Did he love me? Did he not? Would they have hesitated to conclude in the negative? I had exerted all my powers of pleasing, and I had not succeeded!—I ought certainly to have hated him—Reason gave me the counsel—my heart opposed it—I loved him the more, as I had not the least hope of being loved by him. What children do our passions make of us! I was conscious of my imprudence, and yet gave way to the silly vanity that produced it! I saw the error, and voluntarily adopted it. The virtuous woman who can act as she reasons, has not my sensibility.

bility.—She can judge of the passions that warm my heart, no more than a prudent man can judge of the wanderings of a man of genius. Avoid the objects that make too strong an impression upon you ; it is the sole infallible remedy against the danger of them. Happy the woman who can employ it !—Happier still the woman who has no need of it.

We set out—Mr. Wobby was alternately the philosopher, and the man of gallantry. He talked to my sense and reason, but was much more eloquent in his thoughts upon morality, than in his praises of my charms. By the familiarity of our conversation and manners, one would have thought we had been several years acquainted. Confidence and friendship reigned in our looks, and formed our behaviour. I told him my reflections upon the intimacy between us.

“ People

“ People of sense, Miss, are friends at the first sight.—They are like two Europeans, who meet accidentally in China.—The desire of communicating their thoughts, of enjoying the charms of life, forms between them a connection, which grows every day more and more necessary to their happiness. There are so many fools in the world, who either cannot, or will not make use of their mental faculties, that two persons, who dare to think and to reason, are forcibly attracted by each other, and inclined to throw away the mask imposed upon them by the vulgar. With you, I am a philosopher—with the public, I am a clergyman.”

“ With you, Sir, I do not know what I am—but I am certain, I am not so with others. What can be more captivating than wit?”

“ Your beauty, Miss Ramsay.”

“ No;

"No; it does not make upon you the impression your wit makes upon me.—I listen with pleasure—"

"I gaze with delight."

"Come—let us not talk in that manner—We have resolved not to love."

"That resolution, on my side, was very impertinent."

"On mine, it was certainly preposterous."

"Shall we recant?"

"There should be a motive."

"Have you none?"

"Have you any?"

He took my hand in his, and carried it to his lips.

"Was that a Yes, or a No?" He would not tell me.

"How long do you intend to stay at Mrs. P——s?"

What

What a transition ! Ought I to have expected it ?

“ A week ; perhaps a fortnight.”

“ With the happy disposition you have, that time will be sufficient to initiate you in the mysteries of philosophy. Will you accept me for your master ?”

“ Yes.”

And a sudden jolt of the chaise threw me almost in his arms. His lips paid their tribute to my bosom.

“ How can you, without love, behave like a lover ?”

“ As we drink Champagne without thirst.”

I need not tell how much the comparison vexed my vanity. Were I not a greater temptation to his senses, than Champagne ?—I bit my tongue, that I might not betray my indignation. It ne-

ver

ever came into my head that he played the part I performed—I did not see the lover in the man of gallantry—I thought him a friend to pleasure, and an enemy to love.

“You do not pretend, Sir, I should pay a compliment to your delicacy?”

“It matters not, my dear Ramsay, where the temptation lies, so long as it is productive of a delight.”

“This is a doctrine to which I shall never be a devotee.—I will not certainly drink Champagne, if my taste does not forcibly call for it.”

“We should hardly have any enjoyments, were we so extremely delicate in our means of obtaining them. Our taste, lovely Fanny, is sometimes asleep, through a thousand incidents I cannot mention at present; were it not awaked by opportunity, it might receive no life from the
object

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object before it. I will suppose—forgive the supposition—that I love you; do you think that, had not an accident thrown you in my arms, my respect for you would not have deprived me of the pleasure I have enjoyed?”

“In that supposition, the accident might have tempted you; but, as you do not love me, you might as well have neglected the opportunity, as to have made use of it. What! to drink without thirst—and to kiss without love! Can you call that enjoyment?”

“It is an enjoyment, agreeably to circumstances. When our fancy is pleased, and our heart inflamed, our senses are struck with all the symptoms of a passion we do not really feel. At that time, we either suffer all the pains, or enjoy all the pleasures of it.”

“So

"So you have no faith in love?"

"There are women we prefer to others."

"And that preference is not love?"

"I believe it is not."

"What then is love?"

"By you, I should be told what it is."

"You will not be taught."

"You will not have me learn."

"What signifies my leave, if your inclination—Let us talk of philosophy; it is a subject more becoming the resolution we have formed."

He smiled, dropt the subject of love, and answered the questions I made.

We came to Mrs. P—s; and after half an hour of chit-chat, upon nothing, Mr. Wobby left us to post away to Bernem castle.

C H A P. XXXIX.

NOT once could I force from the lips of Mr. Wobby the so often prostituted words, "I love you." The singularity of our conversation, which had alternately been dictated by wit, reason, art, and nature, was no compensation for the losses my vanity had sustained. The more amiable I had appeared, the more worthy of my esteem he had shewed himself, the more intolerable the disappointment I had met with.

"You are very thoughtful, Fanny," whispered Miss P——; "What is the matter with you? I hope you do not envy my happiness."

"What happiness?"

"Why

"Why that of marrying a man with four thousand a year."

"So you marry the man for his money?"

"To be sure."

"And you think you can be happy?"

"How should I be otherwise with four thousand a year?"

"Is Mr. S—— a man of sense?"

"He loves me, and is rich—that is all I know of him."

"And all you care for."

"That is certainly more than sufficient to make me happy."

"He has, very likely, the same indifference for your character; he marries you for the sake of your beauty, as you marry him for the sake of his fortune."

"This is exactly the cause of the match between us."

"This is, undoubtedly, a marriage according to all the rules of fashion."

"So it is, my dear; nothing can be more so."

"Have you feigned no inclination for Mr. S——?"

"Oh! he believes I love him to distraction."

"Well, his hope of happiness is, however, better founded than yours—he loves, and thinks he is beloved—it is enough to justify his folly. But, Amelia, have you no other excuse for yours than his fortune?"

"No other! Are you mad, Fanny? You call folly the best proof I could ever give of my discretion."

"If you center your happiness in a coach and six, or in resorting to all the public places of diversion, I will not challenge

lenge your discretion: But, young as you are, have you no other feelings about you, than those of vanity? Will four thousand a year make amends for the indifference of your husband, or your dislike of him?"

"How you talk, Fanny! the man will always love me."

"You intend then to detain him in the agreeable error that you love him."

"Undoubtedly."

"Do you think it an easy task, Amelia, to return love for love, caresses for caresses, passion for passion?—To answer the looks and the expressions of a husband you dislike, and who doats upon you? Should you attempt to perform that part, you would not have an hour to spare for the pleasures of life—Your manners would be at a perpetual war with your feelings,

and your feelings always balked of the happiness you flattered yourself to have enjoyed—The most wretched slave upon earth would be happy compared to you.”

“Do not believe me such a fool, as to take that trouble for a husband—If my charms alone cannot captivate him, he will not find the allurements they want, in my desire of pleasing him—his indifference will be much more acceptable than his love.”

“But, Amelia, his indifference may make you miserable! Should he insist upon the sacrifice of your levity to the virtues of a domestic life, what would become of the expectations you fondly indulge at present?”

“That never will happen—I am too handsome to fear such a ridiculous event.”

“When your indifference tells him he
has

has been deceived—who knows, Amelia, to what extremities a husband may carry his revenge?"

"Come, Fanny, do not insult me any more with your fears—you are all alike—I have not yet seen a woman who was not jealous of me."

"For what?"

"For what! ah, ah, ah! because I am a beauty, and am to marry a man of fortune. You can, no more than the young ladies in the neighbourhood, forgive me my superiority over you. All have attempted to divert me from this marriage, that they might have a chance of getting Mr. S—— to themselves—All have thrown themselves in his way—most of them have been forward enough to court the favour of a look, of a compliment—nay, if we can believe the country chronicle, Miss

D—— and Miss M—— would not have waited for his word to trust to his honour.”

“This is downright calumny, by all that is good! the young ladies you have mentioned, are as much distinguished for their modesty, as they are for their merit.”

“Their merit! you are, to be sure, an excellent judge of merit. Will you pretend to say that they can vie with me in shape, elegance, complexion?”

“Is not the want of that advantage compensated by taste, judgment, talents, and knowledge?”

“That a compensation for the want of beauty! ha! ha! ha! Ask the men, Fanny.”

“Their answer would not please you.”

“Well, I expect you will add to the number of my rivals—I should be exceedingly

ingly diverted to see you lay a pretension to the heart of Mr. S——. Your merit would frighten me—ha! ha! ha! to-morrow, I will introduce you to my lover—do not fail to set off your merit—I make no doubt but he will find it a compensation for your want of beauty. Ha! ha!”

I heard Amelia without indignation.

“I will not dispute with you the conquest of Mr. S——.”

“You are so modest as to refuse to enter the lists with me.”

“It is pride, Amelia, and not modesty, that makes me decline the combat—I am certain I could not esteem the man who loves you.”

And I got up, careless of her frowns.

“That is great! very great upon my honour! It brings to my mind the fable

of the Fox and the Grapes. Ha! ha! ha!"

Mrs. P—— would know the cause of her laughter; Amelia did not conceal it.

"Fanny," said Mrs. P——, "I depend upon your friendship—forgive the impertinence of Amelia—do not make Mr. S—— sensible of the difference between you."

What vexation in the blush of Amelia! how angry the look she darted at her mother and me!

"The difference between us!" exclaimed she at last, unable to silence the murmurings of her offended vanity. "Without beauty or a portion, Fanny preferred to me! Oh! mother, mother! could you not compliment the girl, without disgracing me?"

"Amelia," said Mrs. P——, "beauty is like a perfume—in its novelty alone consists.
the

the delight it procures—grown familiar, it has the fate of all the goods we possess. Caprice sides for beauty; reason does justice to merit. A lover is not always blind and deaf—there are times when he may be tempted to restore to wit, talents, and good-nature, the empire beauty has usurped over them—when he may be tempted to overlook, in their favour, the want of a portion. A mother must not flatter, Amelia; I have told you the truth—If you will let your pride get the better of your discretion, to-morrow may bring again a repetition of the disappointments you have already experienced.”

“Well, since I must have rivals so unworthy of me, and be told I am a fool, I submit to my destiny—four thousand a year will console me for that misfortune.”

And half singing and half laughing, she left the parlour.

"That girl, Fanny, is the picture of almost all the beauties of the age—for one who does not disdain to appear a woman of sense—who feels the necessity of improving her mind, twenty are like Amelia, the daughters of Pride, Ignorance, and Folly. It is lucky for men, that all women are not born handsome; what a miserable life would they not live, with foolish, whimsical, and conceited beings!—If Amelia will lose her lover, you have my leave, Fanny, to make a husband of him."

"Your compliment, dear Madam, is an honour I do not deserve.—Fanny Ramsay has no claim to the hand of Squire S——."

"A modest, agreeable, and sensible woman, Fanny, is always upon a level with men of fortune; the only chance against

against you, is the scarcity of men of judgment among them. Affluence and flattery are to them what beauty is to women—the creators of a character modified by vice and folly. Most of the fashionable marriages are between fools and coquers; for that reason we seldom see them happy, and commonly followed by a separation or a divorce. You came with Mr. Wobby, how do you like him?”

“He is very entertaining and instructive; his conversation pleased me.”

“You must be a very great favourite with him, since he has condescended to please you. That compliment he seldom pays to a woman; I assure you, that Amelia cannot boast it. He has the reputation of a man of genius and honour.”

“He has promised to bring me some books on moral philosophy—to explain them

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them to me—to be my preceptor in the art of reasoning.”

“ I wish your taste, and desire of learning, might induce Amelia to imitate you. But she is a beauty ; she would think it a disgrace to appear in want of any other accomplishment.”

Mrs. P—’s eulogiums of Mr. Wobby, were very grateful to my heart. Amelia! the proud Amelia, had been neglected by him ! To me he had offered an homage, which he had refused to her beauty ! With these reflections, I could not court sleep. What a seducing painter imagination is ! her pencil kept me awake till day light—then, with the image of Mr. Wobby in my heart, and his name upon my lips, I gave way to a delightful slumber.

C H A P. XL.

MODESTY presided at my toilette.

Modesty! Was I not too bold to trust to her for the graces of my person? The dress, the smile, the gesture of innocence, in competition with the animated coquetry of Amelia! Could the contrast of Amelia please the eye, or affect, agreeably, the heart of a man of fortune?

I do not know how I came to think of Mr. S——. It was not, certainly, my intention to be admired by him, nor had I any resentment against Amelia, yet it was for him that I borrowed from modesty all the charms with which she could adorn me. Amelia was so certain of her superiority—so insolent in her contempt
of

of me, that I was determined not to appear humbled by her beauty, and to display my own accomplishments to the best advantage.

I came down, and found Amelia with her mother. Her dishabille would have embellished Venus herself—it was elegant and voluptuous—it half-concealed the charms desire seemed inclined to display—her lips invited the kiss—her eyes talked to the heart, and her bosom to the senses—pleasure enlivened her countenance—tho' a woman, I beheld her with delight.

“Lord, Fanny,” exclaimed she at the first sight of me, “you make a frightful figure! you intend sure to dress again.”

“Your dress is for a lover, Amelia; mine is for your mother and myself.”

“I expected you under arms.”

“So she is, Amelia,” said Mrs. P.—

“Modesty

“Modesty is always captivating, though the impression it makes be not, at first, so forcible as that caused by the coquetry of your dress, it commonly prevails, at last, over it, in the heart of a man of feeling. Your triumph, Amelia, will always end with the sensation that made you obtain it—her’s will be the more lasting, as it will be granted by reason, and promises a happiness founded upon virtue.”

“Be it so,” said Amelia; “I am not jealous of Fanny’s advantages, charms, pretensions, and modesty. Shall we take a ride this morning?”

“You cannot be happy without visiting, or being visited. Take a book.”

“I hate reading.”

“Well, work at your tambour.”

“I am tired of it.”

“You have promised Mr. S— a sword-

sword-knot embroidered with your own hands."

"I did not think it would cost me so much trouble and time to do it."

"If you will not employ a few hours of your leisure to please him, how will you behave when he is your husband?"

"You are always scolding me, mother. Am I like a child, to be led by the string? I am always wrong in whatever I do. It is intolerable."

Amelia had hardly spoken, when a chariot and four announced Mr. S——.

"Ah! I begin to revive," exclaimed she, with a joy that spread on every feature—"But this is not his usual hour—Why does he come so early?"

Mr. S—— entered the parlour, and his eyes were immediately fixed upon me.

"There she is, the lovely Miss Ram-
say!"

say! I know her by the picture Mr. Wobby has drawn of her."

The unexpected flattering apostrophe forced a blush on my cheek. Amelia stared at him, wondering at the compliment paid me.

"And so, Sir," said she with a disdainful accent, "Fanny Ramsay is the cause of your early visit."

"She is upon my honour!"

He spoke with so much warmth, that I could not help thanking him with a grateful look.

"Dear Amelia, do not be angry; my tribute to your cousin is an honour to you."

"Sir!"

She stopped to breathe—What a fury in her countenance!

"Sir, since the visit is to that girl, I will leave you with her."

"You

"You shall not go. Can you make a crime of an innocent curiosity? Pray sit down, dear Amelia, I beg that favour of you."

"I will not be insulted, Sir."

"Who insults you?"

Mrs. P—— shrugged up her shoulders with indignation—I took a book that lay upon the table and stepped to the door.

"Why do you go, Miss Ramfay? Stay—I intreat you to stay."

"I never will stay, Sir, where I am thought troublesome—the displeasure of Amelia is an honour I did expect no more than the compliment you have condescended to pay me. Let me not be the cause of a difference between you."

"Well, does not the girl believe I am jealous of her? Good God! am I to be provoked in that manner! Miss, stay, I am

am not jealous of you, I assure you; that gentleman is at full liberty to behave as he pleases."

"I thank you, Miss, for the leave you give me," answered Mr. S— with an ironical tone of voice.

Then he took me by the hand, and, with a smile, led me to my chair.

"Proceed, Sir, proceed," said Amelia; "your behaviour is truly commendable."

"What harm is there in what I do? Will you have your mother to be judge between us?"

"I never will, Sir, interfere between two lovers—my reason has nothing to do with their sensibilities—agree, disagree, reconcile, fall out again; it is your business, and not mine."

Spite drew tears from Miss P—. How beautiful in that situation! Mr. S—

was

was affected—he went to her, fell on his knee, and wiped every tear with a kiss.”

“ You do not love me——”

“ I do, sincerely do, Amelia.”

“ Was not your attention to Miss Ram-
say injurious to me? What is the cause
of it?”

“ I would have told you, had you given
me time to speak.”

He got up, and was coming to me.

“ You shall sit by me.”

He looked at me—I returned the look.
The look on my side was graced by gra-
titude; on his, by—I know not what—it
was a charming look. He was uncertain
whether he should obey or not, when
Amelia helping him to a chair, forcibly
ended the contest in her favour.

“ Where was you last night?”

“ At Lord M——’s. Mr. Wobby

came, and told us he had the happiness of travelling with an angel."

"An angel!" exclaimed Amelia; "Is not an angel a beautiful creature? How could that word be applicable to Fanny? The man was certainly insane."

"He was in his sober senses, Amelia. Mr. Wobby judged, not, Miss Ramsay, from your ideas of beauty, but from his own taste and feelings."

"What! is he in love with her?"

"He did not speak the praises of Miss Ramsay as a lover, but as a man willing to do justice to her merit."

"Well, upon honour, I am yet a stranger to that merit so much praised in her—What is it? If it consist in a lovely form, I do not see how she can cause so great an admiration. Pray, Miss, let me into the
secret

secret of the charms you possess unknown to me?"

"What a question!" exclaimed Mr. S—, getting up in a pet.

I could not help bursting into laughter.

"Forgive, Madam."

And dropping a curtsey to the Squire and Amelia, I left the parlour.

"She is right, by every thing sacred! she is right," said Mr. S—, following me with his eyes. "It was a most stupid question!"

CHAP. XLL

MRS. P—— came to me.

“I have left the lovers together— I am afraid her beauty will not get the better of the disgust her foolishness has given him.”

“The *tête à tête*, Madam, will be favourable to her; she has in her charms a remedy against the indiscretions of her pride and the ridiculoufness of her manners. I would venture any wager, that Mr. S—— is at present at her feet, forgetful of the past. Why don’t you marry them, when his senses deprive him of the power of advising with his reason?”

“I will have no hand, Fanny, in the ruin of an honest fellow. Let them hasten or put off the day of their mar-

riage—I will comply with their whims, but not be the creator of them. Reflection, I know it, is not her friend—Amelia will not believe it—A licence and a chaplain are easily got—the opportunity of intoxicating Mr. S—— with love, is at her command—long ago she might have been his wife, had she possessed more prudence than vanity.—How do you like the Squire, Fanny?”

“He is young, rich—”

“And is not the fool Amelia thinks he is. His behaviour to-day, has given me a good opinion of him.”

“Amelia, in her heart, wishes for my absence—It does not become me to stay—Give me leave, dear Madam, to return to Leicester.”

“I will not so far indulge her caprice, Fanny; though she be my daughter, I

will not be unjust to you. Should Mr. S—— repent his engagement with Amelia, and prove worthy of you——You understand me, Fanny—I will always rejoice at the triumph of merit over beauty.”

I went into the garden, not to think of Mr. S——, he had not pleased my fancy—but of Mr. Wobby, whom my vanity had, the greatest part of the morning, made me forget. He had publickly praised me at Lord M——s! “Would he were here to receive my acknowledgments.” I was musing upon the consequences of that wish, when I saw at a little distance Mr. S—— and Amelia, arm in arm, and lips upon lips. I turned immediately into another alley, and was perceived by Amelia.

“Come, Fanny.”

I went to her

"Let us make it up; I am not angry with you.—My dear Mr. S—— has told me my folly, and I repent it."

"I am glad to see you happy."

"I am so to the highest degree." I will gather some flowers for my lover; I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Your reconciliation with Amelia, Sir, is a pleasure to me."

"That I may not be deprived of the delight of seeing you, I am obliged to humour the pride of Miss P——. Her conduct to you has dispelled the charm with which her beauty had bewitched my reason—I see her at present, such as she is—my heart has renounced its error—indifference has succeeded to love.—Though young, Miss Ramsay, I have the head and the heart of a Wobby—My discretion

discretion may vanish before the fire of desire—The voluptuousness of Amelia's countenance has, even now, in spite of my dislike of her character, an extreme power over my senses—It is the sole compliment that I can and will pay her—Never will I marry the woman who, perfectly acquainted with Miss Ramsay, is a stranger to her merit.—Amelia comes—I will talk to you more plainly in a few days—I am not afraid of your abusing my secret."

I was not surprised at the sudden indifference of Mr. S——. But what could he have to tell me? Was it in my favour, that he had formed the resolution not to marry Amelia? As, at that time, Mr. Wobby was predominant in my heart, I did not reflect long upon the intentions of the Squire. I pitied Amelia, the

foolish proud Amelia, who, through a senseless jealousy, and imprudent behaviour, had merited the contempt of Mr. S——. Far from exulting in her future misery, I would have done all in my power to convert it into happiness. Her marriage had been publicly declared—the day was fixed—all the county had paid their compliments—Should she not marry, what a disgrace! Though vain and ambitious, I would not, at the expence of her honour, have accepted the hand of Mr. S——, had he designed to offer it to me. “Was Amelia so lost to the virtues of her sex, as not to be corrected by self-love, or self-interest? I must try the experiment,” said I to myself. “This very day I will attempt to reform her manners, and render her worthy the esteem of Mr. S——. He will love her still,

still, when she adds to her charms modesty, and the desire of making him happy." However seemingly ridiculous the enterprise, I undertook it, even with the hope of succeeding in it. Before Amelia had known the effects of beauty upon men, and heard the language of adulation, she had been conspicuous for the decency of her manners, and the practice of her duties. She was the pride of her mother, and the delight of her friends—her conversation was sprightly and entertaining—her carriage modest without affectation—and her eyes never shone, but with the pleasure she received from the esteem she inspired, or the praises she justly deserved. Such was Amelia, when Nature, her glass, the admiration of men, and the envy of her sex, began and totally completed a revolution in her

mind and heart. Was it impossible to bring her back to her former manners—to make her love again the life and behaviour that had once made her happy and an honour to society? Amelia was only a coquette—There was no libertinism in her blood—It was less through choice than vanity, that she acted the part of a fool. Had an accident deprived her of her beauty, she would have lost the cause that disgraced her character, and gloried in the accomplishments she affected to disdain. How to reclaim her from her folly was the question! She was so haughty, so conceited, of so nice a feeling in the article of beauty, that I could not think of calling religion, honour, or virtue to my help. In the stronger principle of all our passions only, I could find a powerful auxiliary. Self-interest

interest was a great worker of miracles—through its means I purposed to change the form of Amelia.

Mr. S—— saw in me the same woman—What he had said, caused no other alteration in my conduct, than that of seizing every opportunity of making Amelia appear more amiable. I artfully turned the conversation upon subjects agreeable to her fancy, and forced her, unknown to herself, to betray a wit and a taste, she did not think she possessed.

Mr. S—— looked surprised, and, twice or three times complimented Amelia upon the delicacy of her thoughts and the propriety of her expressions. Amelia did not seem to know she deserved that compliment—she wondered at the unusual approbation of her lover.

“Do I not always talk as I do at pre-

sent?" said she to him. "Is your compliment a satire, or a praise?"

"A praise, upon my honour!"

"And to day only have I deserved it?"

"I will speak the truth—I did not think you had half the wit you have just displayed."

"From me, you could only hear the language of sentiment—I loved you, could I speak another?"

"Amelia, I have been wrong—forgive me—the discovery of my mistake gives me an unspeakable delight—your justification makes me supremely happy."

And the man who had said, "I never will marry Amelia," looked as he spoke—supremely happy.

I withdrew unaffectedly out of the parlour, to give Amelia the time of finishing my work. Had she understood me, or

was

was her own reflection the cause of the change in her conduct? Had the fear of losing her lover prevailed at last over her confidence in the power of her beauty? A gentle tap upon my shoulder put an end to my reverie; I turned my head—it was Mr. Wobby.

“Can you forgive the man who diverts you from your thoughts?”

“You I can forgive.”

We were alone in the hall; could I refuse a kiss? No.

C H A P. XLII.

“WE must not go into that parlour,”
said I to Mr. Wobby; “lovers
should not be disturbed.”

“Mr. S—— is the most constant ad-
mirer Miss P—— ever had; if she do
not secure him, she must renounce the
hope of a husband.”

“We will talk of this in the garden;
you are not afraid to venture with me—
are you?”

“I am not; my virtue is at your com-
mand.”

“Thank you.”

And I smiled.

“You would not regret the sacrifice of
it?”

“No, by Heavens!”

“You

“ You could make that sacrifice without love ! The woman of gallantry has more delicacy—her foibles are commonly justified by the feelings of her heart.”

“ In those minutes, dear Miss Ramsay, we talk and act so much like lovers, that there is no knowing whether we be really so, or not.”

“ But how can such minutes exist without love ? Unless a woman be conscious she is loved, she will not certainly help a man in the creation of them.”

“ The man who has desired the esteem of a young woman, is often as dangerous as a lover. Mutual friendship and confidence may, in the private recess of a grove, or of a summer-house, invite Nature and love to be of the party.”

“ That illusion would not be rapid enough to blind their judgment—before
it

it could be brought to perfection, a discreet woman would have time to see the danger, and to avoid it.—A lover in a summer-house, is a magician, who may at once turn our heads, and command our sensibility. Should I love, I would, I assure you, have no such a *tête à tête* with such a man.”

“You would not answer for your discretion?”

“Indeed I would not. Would you be certain of not getting the head-ach by smelling a perfume that gives it almost to every man who breathes it? I am not a prude, Mr. Wobby—with you I may doubt the power of virtue over Nature.”

“Has experience ever confirmed that doubt? Forgive the question—It is a philosopher who makes it.”

“To the philosopher, I will answer in
the

the affirmative; however, draw not the consequence my reply seems to authorize. My senses have often silenced, but never injured my virtue—when prudence forsook me, fortune, as constantly, was my friend.”

“Your candour has a charm I can feel, but not describe—Were I a bishop, or a man of fortune, I would, this instant, make you my wife.”

“What! without love?”

“No, it should not be without love.”

“Remember your resolution.”

And led by I know not what impulse, I entered with him into a cabinet that was before us.

“I have forgot it—Oh! would you forget yours, how happy we should be! Dear Ramsay, I love you.”

And he printed an animated kiss upon my lips.

“I will

"I will not quarrel with you for a jest—you do not surely think I can believe you."

"You may—upon my honour, you may."

"I do not see in your countenance the character of love—your eyes do not encourage me to believe you."

I told a lie—his looks confirmed but too well the declaration he had made.

"My heart cannot deceive me—it dictates what I say."

"Well, I will think of it—let us walk."

I did not like that cabinet—it was so far from the house—the shade of its foliage was too much for the friend of modesty—it had no need of a lover to create a thought, a sensation, a tender reverie.

"I will not leave this place till you repose a faith in my sincerity—till you have said you love me."

"Why, my dear Mr. Wobby, this is the most romantic resolution you can form—you will certainly be buried in this cabinet, if you will not go out of it before I have complied with your desire."

"Is it so difficult to say I love you?"

"No; if you will be contented with the words, I will speak them."

"Speak then, lovely Ramsay."

"I love you."

A cursed involuntary sigh which accompanied the words betrayed me.

What joy in his looks, what a fire in his countenance!

"Again, dear Ramsay!"

"I love you."

It was not in my power to pronounce with indifference—my accent was marked with tenderness and truth. When a woman has said, "I love you," how faintly she opposes the transports of her lover!

Young

Young women! There is poison in those words—Keep within the sight of your mothers or friends when you dare to speak them! I know not what charm Mr. Wobby employed, but I was almost certain of not dying an old maid, when he exclaimed—

“How happy I am! Had I not dissembled my love for you, dear Fanny, you might, perhaps, not have loved me.”

My soul, almost expiring on his lips, revived instantly.

“What have you said?—Let me hear again—it delights my ear—Did you love me at the very time you appeared so indifferent—at the very time you made me so apprehensive of your contempt?”

“At that very time, dear Fanny, I adored you—your wit, your manners, the captivating elegance of your person,
forced

forced in my breast the passion I have declared to you."

"On my vanity you depended for your happiness!—You thought your indifference would throw me into your arms!—You deserve my praises for your knowledge of the female heart—but you shall not be happy."

And I proved to him immediately that he should not be so.

"What a strange caprice, dear Ramsey!"

And he attempted to regain the advantages of which I had deprived him.

"It is in vain, dear Mr. Wobby—I am determined—to-morrow I may reward you for your sincerity—to-day I will punish you for your dissimulation."

"How cruel! In the moment——"

"I know it is cruel—I almost share in your

your sorrow—but why did you not keep silent a few minutes longer? Was it not imprudent to rouse my vanity when it had lost itself in your arms?—When the word and the sensation of pleasure, ought only to have been felt and spoken? Do not look so disconsolate—I love you still.”

“Who could have thought of such an accident?”

“The man who, having so ingenuously deceived me, had forced me to make him happy. Your plan was well laid—it is a pity it has failed in the execution!”

“Can you banter me when I am distractedly mad?”

“Philosophy will comfort you for the disappointment. As you are a poet, I expect an extempore upon the subject—let it be sublime, pathetic, the characteristic of your wonderful dismal disaster.”

“Your

"Your mirth is murder."

"Your folly deserves it—Have I not told you, that when prudence forsook me, fortune was always my friend? I had no hopes of obtaining the honours of the day, since love and my sensibility yielded voluntarily the victory to you—You gave it to me—I must make the best of it—Cheer your spirits, for it will not avail you to complain."

"Though a man of sense, I have been a great fool."

"Though a fool, I have shewn myself a woman of great sense! A lost opportunity is seldom recovered—My dear Mr. Wobby, let us keep to friendship—Fate has declared against you—you must submit to its law."

"This is, upon my honour, an event which confounds my reason—it is original—

nal—I am certain it never happened before—it was neither caprice nor libertinism that made you return my caresses—I am conscious of it.”

“No, it was love. Thinking I had at last pleased you, I made no scruple to act as I felt.”

“Was not my confirmation of your triumph over me an inducement for you to love me still more?”

“It produced a contrary effect—I was ashamed of having been the dupe of your art—Dear Mr. Wobby, I thank you for my lucky escape.”

“Saucy girl! you deserve to be punished.”

The saucy girl was not then in the cabinet. I defied his revenge, and laughed him out of it.

C H A P. XLIII.

THE levity of my behaviour was adapted to the character of Mr. Wobby and my own—in any other woman it would have been an excess of folly and impertinence. Unless a woman's head be absolutely exempt from prepossession, she must not go into a cabinet with my feelings, and an agreeable man. Let her not trust to her virtue, to the respect of her lover.—By all that is good! they will be of no service to her. A man of courage, in the front of a battle, shrinks sometimes, compulsively, into a coward; and shall a weak woman dare to hope to triumph over Nature and a lover in a solitude! She has no need of experience to know the danger of a solitude in the company of the
man

man she loves, or whom she believes to be enamoured with her. Every minute she happens to be alone with him in her own apartment must have told her the consequences of a *séjour à tête*, where there is no fear of an intruder. Young women—I cannot reiterate it too often—if you desire to be virtuous, and not to be indebted to chance for an escape, keep always within sight of your mothers and friends. You mothers, whether intelligent or stupid, be more careful of your daughters' virtue, than you are studious of pleasing your husbands, or of deserving the public esteem. Your reputation may outlive a suspicion; but it is not so with a young unmarried woman; a false step is an indelible disgrace, which deprives you of a daughter, and society of a member, who might have been an honour to it. Forgive

give me—truth has carried me too far—
but I have proclaimed the truth! I will
not recant.

We met Mr. S—— and Amelia in the
parterre, playing like children, who center
their happiness in the present. The sight
of them was a torment to Mr. Wobby.

“The odious spectacle!” exclaimed he.
“Either let us imitate them, dear Ramsay,
or let me fly from objects who, too feel-
ingly, call to my mind the loss I have
sustained.”

Poor Mr. Wobby! his countenance
called for my pity—called for a more ten-
der sentiment—There was so much love
in his grief, I almost repented to have
caused it. My heart did not support my
good disposition in his favour—his passion
for me had rendered me indifferent—my
senses were grown cool—I wondered at the
success he had met with.

"Vanity, Mr. Wobby, forced me into your arms—vanity forced me from them. That sentiment I mistook for love—had you indulged it, you would have been happy. Since you have made me sensible of my error, I can no longer, with honour to myself, hear from you a language my heart is not inclined to answer. If you will not be contented with friendship, we must part."

"Then we must part. Oh! Miss Ramsay, you know not the heart you scorn."

"I do it justice, Sir. But is your merit a reason for me to love you? Please me, and you will find in me a tender and faithful mistress—till then, do not flatter yourself with seizing again the opportunity my imprudence has given you, and your indiscretion has made you lose."

"Adieu."

"Adieu."

And

And I joined Amelia and Mr. S——.
Mr. S—— discovered a pleasure on seeing me.

“What is become of Mr. Wobby?”

“Business did not permit him to stay.”

Amelia was at a little distance from us.

“I cannot tell how lovely you have appeared to me. What charms unknown to yourself did you not display, in forcing Amelia to act like a woman of sense!”

“She is naturally what you found her an hour ago; her love for you has made her reassume her true character.”

He shook his head.

“That I am not even tempted to believe.”

“Your incredulity is an injury she does not deserve.”

Amelia came, and the conversation was general. Amelia supported exceed-

ingly well the character she had assumed; she was easy, natural, perfect mistress of her part—yet I was between her and Mr. S——; his eyes told me clandestinely, his partiality for me. I was surprised at the preference. Amelia, in her new form, was the most captivating beauty I had ever beheld. No longer jealous of me, Amelia took no notice of her lover's praises of me—Twice or thrice she would have me share with her in his caresses. After one kiss he did not give as a friend, and which brought a blush on my cheeks, he arose on a sudden, to write a memorandum for a business, he said he had to transact the next day, and was afraid to forget. When he had done, wit, gaiety, and pleasure continued to do the honours of the day.

Mr. S—— had not made a tour through
the

the European Courts, in the character of our modern travellers, who most commonly leave their good qualities behind, to appear among us under the form of a senseless macaroni, a ridiculous virtuoso, or a bold scoffer at decency and religion. He had left to the nations he had visited, their vices, foibles, and follies, which, though agreeable in France or Italy, through habit, the levity of their genius, or their familiarity with them, when transplanted hither, generally metamorphose the man of sense into a fool. His knowledge was the result of a diligent study of their manners, laws, customs, and policy. He could not tell the fashions of the day, nor remember the names of the favourite singers he had heard at Florence, Rome, or Venice; but he knew the good and the bad of the legislation of every govern-

ment, and could point out the abuses, and the remedies of them. The taste of Mr. S—— had been equally improved with his understanding. He had not, like fifty gentlemen of fashion I could mention, been the dupe of those crafty impostors who, in Italy, palm upon the ignorant traveller, a modern for an antique, or a copy for an original. He had been admitted to the closet of *D'Alembert* and *Diderot*, and gloried in their esteem, more than in the distinction with which he had been received by the reigning princes in Europe. He was ardent in his passions, brave without ostentation, and generous in the extreme, at the call of merit or pleasure. Such was Mr. S——, at the age of three and twenty—such was the man who preferred me to Amelia. Had his person answered the accomplishments

ments of his mind, I believe I should not have had the generosity of pitying Amelia. When men or women do good at the expence of their happiness, they may be deemed virtuous through principle—But for one generous act proceeding from such a cause, how many, like mine, are the effects of caprice or indifference! Whenever self-love or self-interest commands, justice and generosity expire in our hearts—then we have neither charity nor friendship, but for ourselves.—It is a melancholy truth! Moralists be silent—experience is against you.

C H A P. XLIV.

MRS. P—— calling for Amelia, Mr. S—— seized that opportunity to whisper in my ear——

“Take that paper—I depend upon your discretion and compliance.”

I put the paper in my pocket; and a few minutes after, he left us.

“Well, dear Fanny,” said Amelia, “have I not been a very clever girl to-day?”

“What induced you to change your behaviour?”

“The fear of losing Mr. S——; he was so exasperated this morning at my impertinence, and cursed it so heartily, that I saw the minute when he would have sworn never to see me again. I did, in vain, plead my love for him, and gave

it

it as an excuse for my jealousy—he had no ear. Had his eyes been as unfavourable to me, I should have lost my lover—but he forcibly gazed upon me, and I was forgiven. It was not, however, Fanny, without some losses on my side—my modesty was obliged to purchase the pardon he granted. In that critical minute, she was the slave of my vanity, and did not dare to deny what he asked. He took—stole—plundered—like a delirious man, he would have forgotten my virtue, and his honour, had not the voice of my mother put an end to the robberies he would have committed. Already resolved to please him, I easily understood you in the afternoon. Fanny, you have been very kind, and very generous; without you, I should not have attracted his attention, or deserved his praises. Would

I had seen you sooner!—I fear my reformation begins too late, and too suddenly. The extreme facility with which I have passed from one extreme to another, may incline him to think me false! Oh! dear Fanny, should I not marry him, I could not outlive my disgrace.”

“Proceed, Amelia, as you have begun—force in his mind the conviction of your merit.—Perseverance in your present plan will gradually work him into an esteem of you. It will be your fault if he do not soon believe you worthy of his attachment. Should his incredulity subside, your situation will tell you the arms you are to employ against him.—Intoxicate him with love, Amelia, and then make him capitulate. Remember the example of Miss G——; she never would have been a countess, had she not made a fool of her lover,

lover, and a husband of that fool. When victory sides for us, it matters not how we conquer our enemy."

"I will follow your advice, Fanny."

"Do, Amelia, and may you meet with success."

I retired to my room, satisfied with the incidents of the day. My triumphs over Mr. Wobby and Amelia were a flattering compliment to my reason and vanity. I opened the paper of Mr. S——.

"Dear Miss Ramsay,

"I have an affair of the greatest importance to communicate to you. Be so good as to meet me to-morrow, at eleven in the morning, in the grove, near the fish-pond.

"Cha. S——."

"Shall I go? Shall I not go?" As the question was of an absolute indiffe-

rence to me, I put off to the next day, the solution of it. We had just breakfasted when the appointment of Mr. S—— came into my mind. What had I to fear from a gentleman—a man of honour—a man I did not like? In day-time—in an almost open field—the fish-pond commanded by a frequented road. What had I to dread? Nothing.

I took a book, and went to the place appointed. Mr. S—— was waiting for me.

“How obliging your condescension, lovely Fanny! A mistress, going to her lover, could not be more punctual.”

He looked at his watch.

“It wants ten minutes to eleven. If your heart be not engaged, I have a reward for your complaisance to me.”

“My heart is not engaged—however,
do

do not offer that reward; for I am almost certain I shall not accept it."

"I am almost certain you will not refuse it.—Though not a handsome young man, I may have a character not unworthy of you."

"I honour your character.—But pray tell me the important business you have with me."

"First let us sit down."

And he led me to a little hill on one side of the grove, parted from the fish-pond by a few shrubs and evergreens. The place was rather too private—I took no notice of it.

"Now, dear Ramsay, I will disclose the important business upon which depends the happiness or the misery of my life. I love you, and will have no other wife than you."

"Then,

“Then, Sir, you shall die a bachelor, for you never shall be my husband.”

“What! not be my wife! What vice in me deserves such contempt?”

“I know no vice in you, Sir; but your faith and hand are engaged to Amelia.—I will not rob her of her lawful rights.”

“She has forfeited them; her foolish and haughty behaviour to you has made me free.”

“Her behaviour was a compliment to you. Is not jealousy the companion of love? Her beauty is so superior, that I forgive her scorn of me. Any other woman, in her situation, would, perhaps, have shewn her resentment in a more contemptible manner. Was not your attention to me extremely injurious to a woman of her excellent accomplishments—and so much in love with you? What
she

she has done, I would have done—ten to one, I should not have had the same patience and moderation which she had.”

“Your panegyric of Amelia’s behaviour does not justify her in my eye.”

“Would you sport wantonly with the honour of a young woman? Is not the day of your marriage fixed? What would all the country think of Amelia, should you break your word?”

“What they please—Amelia has repented too late—had she sincerely loved me, she would have been more studious of deserving my esteem. Miss Ramsay, I have seen through her arts.—She could not act naturally a part, her silly pride has made her long ago disdain to perform—it is only the fear of losing me, that caused the sudden alteration in her conduct and manners.—I have recovered my reason,
and

and will preserve it—my resolution is unalterable—do not attempt to make me change it.”

“Poor Amelia!”

“I am not come here to talk of her. Dear Miss Ramsay, your character has charmed me—here is the hand of an honest man.—Will you accept it?”

“Indeed I cannot. Though your inconstancy to Amelia be the effect of your dislike of her, I might be thought the cause of it.”

“It is a false delicacy, Miss Ramsay; a discreet woman ought not to scruple to benefit by the imprudence of a fool. The self-approbation of your own conscience must make it of no import to you, whether you be censured or praised. Envy and malignity may rise in arms against you; but be assured you will be applauded

plauded by all men of honour. Amelia shall not be a gainer by your refusal; for, I swear, she never shall be my wife."

"Your oath does not frighten me—a lover enjoys the privilege of perjuring himself. Mr. S——, let us reason coolly; I have not the vanity of pretending to an equality with Amelia. She is a perfect beauty, and you will soon find her mind adequate to it. Like a king, surrounded by slaves, she has heard nothing but the language of flattery.—Both, till misfortune make it indispensable for them to call for truth, are necessarily the children of error and folly. Be the cause of Amelia's reformation what it will, it has been productive of good—that is enough to justify it. Were we to judge of the actions of men or women, by the goodness of their motive, we should find none deserving of
our

our applause—you have no need of philosophy to acknowledge this truth.—How could you, Sir, sanctify your attachment to me?”

“Your present conversation, should it be known, would excuse my neglect of Amelia, and ennoble my partiality for you.”

Wit is not the sole quality requisite in a wife—Amelia, in that respect, may not be my inferior.—You have seen me but a few hours, how can you be acquainted with my character? I am, perhaps, the reverse of what I seem to be.—Should it be so, would your supposition, that I possessed every virtue, prove a justification of your choice? Believe me, Sir; keep to Amelia.—God forbid I should deceive you! Amelia will make you perfectly happy.”

“Your disinterestedness astonishes me!

In

—In favour of Amelia, you disdain a noble fortune! you praise her, after she has attempted to humble you! Were you rich, I might not wonder at your generosity.—

Oh! lovely Ramsay, your virtues endear you to my heart—I will not relinquish the hope of being your husband.”

“I thank you for that hope, Sir; but I never will indulge it.”

“Then you must be my mistress.”

“Must I? This is a compliment I did not expect from you.”

“I have paid you an honourable one, and you have not answered it—I love you too much not to possess you, either as a wife or as a mistress—chuse which you will be.”

“Neither, Sir. Do you think that a woman who declines you for a husband, would take you for her lover?”

“That

“That is not impossible, dear Ramsay. A woman of your good sense, and free from prejudices, may prefer the independency of a mistress to the dignity of a wife. That manner of thinking is more agreeable to Nature, who abhors the chains with which the political law has fettered us. We are born with an invincible passion for liberty—with an invincible desire of enjoying all the fruits forbidden by the law and religion. A husband and a wife are two slaves, who, unless they share cheerfully in one another’s pains and pleasures, perpetually curse the indissoluble tie that binds them together. Had the legislation authorised divorce—love, peace, and harmony would reign in every family—At liberty to part, the husband would cherish his wife; the wife be faithful to her husband. By taking away the real
obstacle

obstacle of their happiness, they would destroy the cause that makes them miserable. A lover and a mistress, dear Ramsay, are two free agents, whose engagements cease naturally with the passion they had for each other. They live to enjoy all the delights of life, unmixed with disgust or satiety. Every day opens with the same prospect of happiness—they walk upon flowers—only think how to add to their mutual esteem—drink at the cup offered by pleasure—and sleep in the arms of voluptuousness.”

“Their life is, undoubtedly, Sir, dictated by Nature, and preferable to that of a husband and wife, whose chains are not gilt by the liberty of a divorce. Such a life I would not scruple to live with the man I should love.”

“You are too enlightened, dear Ramsay;
to

to have any faith in love—love is like thirst—a fierce desire. Found your intimacy with a man upon other principles—Let him be a man of feeling and honour, sensible, and generous—with him, the raptures of love will daily increase with your esteem of him. Love has but one day—that day is often overcast with storms—the reign of friendship is everlasting.”

“What you say I believe to be true; yet it is not satisfactory to my delicacy. I never will, with a spark of reason about me, make the sacrifice of my virtue.”

“Your reason, dear Ramsay, may give way to gold, as well as to your sensibility.”

“No—That will never happen—I despise gold.”

“You do not yet know its value! Gold is the spring that turns our foibles into as many

many virtues, and procures all the pleasures and honours to be enjoyed in this world. With it you may, with impunity, launch into the regions of folly—adopt manners peculiar to yourself—and talk and behave as you please.”

How captivating the picture he drew!

“Gold shall never purchase me.”

“What! when every man in England can be bought, shall a sensible woman resist a temptation which can make her happy? In the name of reason, do not give me so bad an opinion of you. Can you soberly prefer poverty to affluence?”

Now I began to repent of having come to the place of interview. He talked with too much sense, not to convince me, that affluence was preferable to poverty. He looked so tenderly, was so desirous of making a proselyte of me, that I fancied it was prudent to leave him.

“We

"We will continue this conversation another time."

And I attempted to rise; he stopped me.

"No, dear Ramsay, let us not defer till to-morrow, what can be concluded to-day. Let me intreat you to be a friend to yourself."

I was but too much what he wanted me to be. Never did I look or behave so foolishly in my life—I blushed, without knowing for what—and was silent, through the fear of betraying what I thought it the interest of my vanity to conceal."

"Have you ever seen, dear Ramsay, a bank note of a thousand pounds?"

"Oh! now," said I in my heart, "it is all over with me."

"No, Sir."

He pulled out his pocket-book, and threw

threw one in my lap. How I trembled ! I could not conceal my joy at the sight of it. O gold ! gold ! what a seducer art thou ! As my looks were still equivocal, Mr. S —, to determine them in his favour, presented me with such another seducing note. He met with the success his generosity deserved ; the agreeable confusion into which the bank notes threw me, telling him plainly, he might dare—he dared—I came to myself, only to be sensible he had so much trifled with my modesty, that my virtue could not *apropos* stand upon her defence. My modesty gone, what was my virtue ? Is there any difference between them ? Can a young woman suffer a man in her arms, and think herself virtuous, because thro' chance, or the respect of her lover, she has been preserved from ruin ? Admit

him to a criminal familiarity, and yet pretend to be a virtuous woman! There are a thousand women who approve of the impertinent distinction, and act agreeably to it; they are, in my opinion, no more virtuous than the common prostitute—The first are prudent sinners, who would be so publicly, could they, like the last, laugh at the contempt of the world. Is that man an honest man, who would rob my purse, were he not afraid of being hanged? I see no difference between that fellow and the woman I have mentioned.

Two thousand pounds! Women do not frown—Few among you would have refused the bribe.

Of all my lovers, Mr. S—— was the first who drew forcibly tears from my eyes—who made my soul shake with terror and delight—who—he deserved to triumph—

umph—When we heard the report of a gun—at the same minute a hare leaped over our heads, and ten voices told us the approach of its enemies. I will do justice to Mr. S——; though cursedly mad at the disappointment, he generously sacrificed all his advantages to my reputation.

“Lie down quietly, dear Ramsay, I will go and see who, and where they are.”

How he forgot there was no danger, I cannot conceive. The grove was on three sides surrounded by a wall, that screened us against the indiscretion of men. I was wise enough not to put him in mind of it. I reflected on my narrow escape, and exclaimed,

“I shall certainly die an old maid.”

With that reflection I went to meet Mr. S——.

"We are safe, dear Ramsay; they are gone another way.

"Deprived of bliss at the very moment it circulated in my veins, at the very moment our souls were going to unite—when your sighs, and the repeated heaves of your bosom told me you enjoyed my victory, and partook of my raptures! No lovers were ever so cruelly disappointed. Come, dear Ramsay, let new love and new transports make amends for our loss—Come, my soul is impatient."

And he clasped me in his arms.

I was resolved not to give twice a chance to the man whom fortune had not favoured at the first. That resolution supported me against my senses; warmed by the fire of his expressions, and the sentiment still living of the past emotions.

"Dear Mr. S——, take your bank
notes

notes back—I hate that cause of my disgrace—how easily they intoxicated my reason. I forgive your behaviour, but cannot be so indulgent to my own.”

“Dear Ramsay, I never take back what I have given. The bank notes are yours; you have deserved them. Blush not—you have deserved them. It is not your fault, if I have not been happy—should you refuse to make me so, I would not repent the present I have made you.”

“Well did you know the power of gold!—I thought myself proof against it. Why did I not grant to your merit, what self-interest obliged me not to deny?—Oh! leave me—I am a contemptible wretch.”

“My merit, dear Ramsay, was a recommendation to your esteem—only—that sentiment was too weak to warm your

sensibility in my favour. I adored you, and would be happy. Next to love, gold is the strongest temptation. My respect for you, dear Ramsay, made me offer a bribe, which, in this age, would be thought extravagant.—It secured you against want, and made you independent. My generosity, strengthened by your situation, conquered your indifference. Your behaviour is justified by Nature and Reason. Put those bank notes in your pocket-book, dear Ramsay.”

Did he deserve that I should remember my resolution? No, I forgot it in his arms.

Fortune interposed again in my favour.—Thought had given way to feeling, when the door, through which we had come into the grove, opening on a sudden, we heard Amelia, and several women,

men, whom the diversion of fishing had brought to the place. The danger was so imminent, that we threw ourselves immediately behind a pallisade, from which we gained the opposite door, and went into the next field. We did not stop till we came to the bottom of a hill, when certain of being secreted from every eye, I burst into laughter.

“ Fortune, dear Mr. S——, has been very unpropitious to you.”

“ And to you, dear Ramsay,” answered he smiling. “ You are still a maid, and that is a sin with which a woman of your sense ought not to reproach herself.”

“ Though still a maid, I am not, certainly, a virtuous woman.”

“ Virtue in a woman, dear Ramsay, is merely confined to the opinion the world has of it. The libertine is like a coward

—if they can assume, and support the opposite character, they will be esteemed, a virtuous woman, and a man of courage. Relatively to you, virtue is nothing. Nature, dear girl, is before the social law. This has prescribed a decorum, to which you must submit—no other duty is required of you. By being still a maid, you oppose the views of Nature, and are unworthy the sensibility she gave you.—Pleasures are like life—they are the property of every man, of which royal fools, or even reverend doctors in divinity have no right to deprive him. However, as an open disobedience to them is productive of some political evils, the philosophers mix in public with the vulgar, and in private restore to Nature the power tyranny had usurped over her. Nature, dear Ramsay, did not create you, like Tantalus,

talus, in the midst of all the goods of this world, to be only tempted by them.—The enjoyment of them is in your power—it is by making use of it, that you can shew your gratitude to her. I will not have you be a maid—by all that is sacred, you shall no longer be so.”

“Swear not—think of the past—fortune seems declared against you.”

“Be my friend—and she shall be mine.”

I wisely reflected, that his spirits were in a greater calm; that the first ferment of his desires was over; that the consequences might put it out of my power to choose betwixt being his mistress, or living agreeably to my own fancy.

“No, dear Mr. S——, fate has not formed us one for another. You are pre-

destinated for Amelia; with her you will be more happy."

"I do not wish for such a happiness with Amelia. Will you be my wife? I make the proposal again."

The offer did not tempt me.

"I answer again, I cannot be your wife."

"You have certainly, at present, no objection to live with me as my mistress?"

"I will be very plain and sincere with you—visit Amelia, as usual, for a fortnight; if in that time you are not her husband, I will be your mistress. During that period you shall not see me."

"Agreed," said Mr. S —, with a joy that made me almost repent my engagement.

We

We sealed the treaty upon one another's lips.

"This afternoon, or to-morrow morning, I will return to Leicester—keep your promise, and you will find me faithful to my word."

Then, after a few insignificant caresses, we parted, and I went home.

C H A P. XLV.

I Went to the grove, unconscious of danger—armed with indifference, nay, with dislike—fearless of accidents and temptations—with a cool head, and a still cooler heart—Yet, in the man, against whom I possessed so many advantages, I found the most formidable enemy that had yet attacked my virtue! By talking to my reason, he intoxicated my senses, and forced me to consent to his happiness! What head, with the insignificant fortune I had, would not have turned giddy at the offer of two thousand pounds! Is there any woman of the first rank who would not have been tempted by that sum?—Any woman, a few orders above me, who would not have accepted it?

Vanity,

Vanity, caprice, or libertinism, throw, every day, many women into the arms of a fool—Gold had opened mine to a man of merit. Is not the gold that at once screened me against the fear of misery, a nobler excuse for my foible, than vanity, caprice, or libertinism? Though gold justified my deviation from virtue, my delicacy upbraided me for having yielded to it. Had I loved Mr. S——, I would have made him happy, and despised his gold—but without love, self-interest had made me act the part of a lover!—To gold only he had been indebted for my caresses! I blushed with indignation at my conduct. My delicacy will be laughed at by the polite part of mankind—I know it—I did not boast that delicacy to be complimented upon it—I say only what my feelings were, before

fore I seriously reflected upon the general veneration for gold, and found in it an excuse for the meanness of my behaviour. I do not intend to satirize the manners of the age, or to bring a blush upon the cheeks of the fair, who surrender more to the gold, than to the merit of their lovers. Men or women, in need of a few hundreds or thousands, will seldom scruple to give up their honesty or virtue, in exchange for them. But should their want be more imaginary than real—more the effect of vanity than of indigence, I will aver, that the prostitution of their persons or characters, is a violation of the dignity of our nature, which philosophy will never authorize or justify. Strong passions, or craving wants, only can enoble the wanderings of our heads or hearts. The woman of fashion, who, to
purchase

purchase a needless trinket, fixes in cold blood a price upon her virtue—and the man of fortune, who, to repair his losses at the gaming-table, sells his honour to his prince, are much more infamous than the prostitute and pick-pocket, who, to support their existence, live in open defiance of law and morality. Love, or the seduction of unexpected circumstances, ought only to be the creators of the foibles of a woman of fortune. Men ought to soar above the religious or political laws, except when they oppose the gratification of their ambition, love of glory, or such other fiery passions, which cannot be circumscribed in the circle drawn by legislators. In any other case, their contempt of honour or virtue declares a contemptible and corrupt soul.

Mrs.

Mrs. P—— was reading a letter when I came in.

“I have good news to impart to you, Fanny; I can procure you the place of companion to Lady Spelmer; you answer perfectly the description her Ladyship has drawn of the woman she wants. I will read it to you. ‘Let her be gay, sensible, discreet and good-natured.— Though I dispense with the advantages of birth and beauty, she must have a pleasing form, an elegant countenance, and a sprightly conversation. When you have found such a woman, send her to me; she will find in me a friend and a protector.’ It should seem, Fanny, that Lady Spelmer had you in her sight when she pourtrayed the picture. Will you accept of a place, in which you will have an opportunity of acquiring the knowledge of mankind, and of the world?”

“I accept

“ I accept of the place, and thank you gratefully for it. I am glad to go to London. Write to Lady Spelmer, and to-morrow morning I will set out with the letter.”

Nothing could be more agreeable, in the situation in which I was, than a journey to London. I had been long tormented with the passion of visiting that celebrated theatre of splendor, pleasure, luxury, and magnificence, upon which beauty was adored at the expence of virtue—where the decorations of voluptuousness were always raised upon the ruins of modesty—whose principal managers, led by caprice or folly, distributed honours, titles, or dignities, to the motley crowd of fools, knaves, and flatterers, who, closely united behind the scenes and upon the stage, diligently shut the way

to

to the man of merit. It was a brilliant puppet-show, in which I was desirous of acting a part, and like the rest of mortals, trust to my performance for the felicities of this world.

Amelia came, I told her the place offered me, and my intention of setting out the next day for London.

“Stay some time longer, dear Fanny. When you are gone, what will become of me? Your admonitions are the more necessary, as, being a party in the cause, I shall not be cool enough to know my advantages, and to turn them to my benefit.”

“Though I have not your accomplishments, Amelia, I am a novelty to the eye of Mr. S——. The praises of Mr. Wobby have prejudiced him in my favour—his esteem may create a caprice, which,
by

by degrees, may be mistaken for love. I will not be the cause, Amelia, of a rupture between you and your lover—Let it be your sole care to please him, to make him recant the opinion he actually entertains of you—Unless you be mistress of his desires, you will not command his reason—This will obey the feelings, that will force the fear of finding you false, to submit to the pleasure of possessing you. Oblige him to wish for the day of his happiness—Amelia, deserve such a husband—You will seldom see a splendid fortune the portion of a man of sense.”

No longer conceited and proud, Amelia promised to be steady in her conduct, and to renounce the silly vanity that had disgraced her character. Mrs. P—— rejoiced in her daughter's reformation, both paid me the compliment of it, and

I was

I was happy in the consciousness that it was my work. Young women, who center all your merit in your beauty, think of Amelia, and, like her, repent and alter your behaviour! Lovers will attend beauty, but their homage will consist only of desire and flattery, when the qualities of the mind do not correspond to the charms of the person.

I was just going to set out the next morning, when Mrs. P—— took me aside.

“You will want some money for the expences of your journey; here is a purse of five and twenty guineas.”

As I could not let Mrs. P—— into the secret of my fortune, I was obliged to accept her present. Two minutes after, Amelia whispered in my ear—

“If I am so happy as to marry Mr.
S——,

S——, depend on an handsome annuity for your life."

"I will refuse nothing that is advantageous to me," answered I smiling.

And I stepped into a post-chaise. At Kegworth I took the machine for Leicester, to avoid the censure of the inhabitants, who, still convinced of my poverty, would have wondered at poor Fanny's giving herself the airs of independency in a post-chaise.

C H A P. XLVI.

I Told my mother the cause of my sudden return, but thought proper to conceal from her my adventures with the clergyman and the Squire.

“Such a place as yours, Fanny, I had, when I was a young woman.—It was at the Countess of Cardigan I learned to estimate the prejudices of education, the rights of Nature, the scruples of ignorance, and to distinguish between right and wrong. The knowledge of the world, Fanny, gives the lie to almost every principle we have imbibed in the early period of our life. Here, you are ordered the sacrifice of your sensibility; at the school of Lady Spelmer you will see the reason, the manners, and the actions

tions of all men and women, obedient to the call of their feelings. You will hear, however, of virtue and honour—but these words are to the reality of their sentiments, what the looks of a devotee are to the depravity of his morals—a cloak, under which they enjoy all the delights of vice, and obtain the respect of the vulgar. Women of fashion, Fanny, are generally so idle, so dissipated, so frivolous, so much like children in their taste and whims, that, as careless of the future, as forgetful of the past, they are constantly the slaves of the present affection. Their sentiments and feelings are like their pleasures and occupations—the trifling flights of nature and reason.—They sip—sip only in the cup of delights.—All their senses being perpetually wound up to the desire of enjoying, no scruple opposes,

opposes, no reflection poisons, the transient caprice they indulge. The trouble of refusing a lover who will obstinately ask again and again—the fear of losing a friend whom habit has endeared to them—the certainty of being admired, are sufficient motives to make them comply with a request, it is much more easy for them to grant, than to deny. I have known a great lady, who, fearful of coming too late to a public place of diversion, yielded to the intreaties of a man she would not have made happy, had not her head been, at that instant, totally occupied with the amusements of the evening. Such is love, Fanny, among people of rank—such, in general, are all the passions that give life to their existence—their spring is in caprice, idleness, and vanity. With them, Fanny, I should have

have laughed at morality, and made prudence my sole virtue, had I not been in the midst of vice. The familiarity of it gave me a disgust, it was not in the power of my lovers to conquer. Like the sober man, whom chance brings among the votaries of Bacchus, I gazed with wonder upon the voluptuaries, and did not feel the least desire of partaking in their enjoyment. I was young, no enemy to flattery, and as sensible as you are, Fanny; yet I lived chaste in the center of libertinism. When I left Lady Cardigan, I had neither my reason nor fortune to thank for a lucky escape. I will not, however, Fanny, glory in that virtue which sent me back a maid to my father's house. It was not the effect of my will, but of the circumstances, which robbed pleasure of its charms, at the same time that they

made me absolute mistress of enjoying it. It is with pleasure, as with every other good which it is not in our power to possess—the liberty of commanding it leaves our hearts in a stupified languor—I was virtuous, because pleasure, far from being forbidden me, was always ready at my call. Such, Fanny, would, perhaps, all women be, were no restraint laid upon their behaviour. The temptations of Nature are not so compulsive as those which spring from an opposition to our desires. ‘You shall not do this—’ the peremptory *shall*, will, I fear, be always death to virtue.”

It was the first time my mother gave me the reason of the knowledge she had displayed in our conversations. Curiosity induced me to beg of her that she would trust me with the secret history of her life.

life. "When we are in London," answered she, smiling, "I will open my heart to you."

"Brought up in the polite world, how came your manners to be the reverse of what they ought to be?"

"Necessity, Fanny, compelled me to take the character of my situation in life. A man of merit screens it from the fools, whose favours his poverty obliges him to court.—Circumstanced as I am, I am that person of merit."

"Would you had thought me worthy of your confidence before! I would not have fallen into so many errors."

"Errors, Fanny, like misfortunes, are necessary to acquire wisdom—without them, men and women are the sport of every passion, and the dupes of all those whose fortune or happiness depends upon

their credulity. All that I could have said to convince you of the perfidy of men and their contempt of virtue, would have only glanced transitorily upon your ears; the conduct of Sir George, Farrel, and Mr. C——, have made you sensible of that truth. Taught by experience and reflection, you are armed against the language of flattery, and the folly of trusting to the looks, the countenance, and the words of men. Candour is a defect inherent in youth—as they have not yet known the necessity of concealing their sentiments, and acting a fictitious part, they naturally suppose all men and women equally sincere and honest—hence their minds are always ready to welcome whatever pleases their vanity, or their imagination. The charm of pleasure, unknown to us, helps the means of seduction

duction employed against us.—We listen with complaisance to a language that creates an agreeable sensation, and commonly esteem the man who warms our hearts with it. When a young woman possessed of tender sensibilities, is in that situation, will she coldly reflect upon the possibility of that man being void of honour? No, Fanny; experience tells you that she will, on the contrary, think such a meditation extremely injurious to him. For a few who have the good luck of not repenting their credulity, how many are daily the sad victims of it! I am afraid, Fanny, we are not born to be virtuous and wise! since, in spite of experience, men are always the slaves of their passions—since it is not in our power to benefit by the follies of others.”

“ Yet we are perpetually told we are

mistresses of our desires, and at liberty to chuse between vice and virtue."

"That liberty is a chimera, Fanny; we are not free in our elections—we are forcibly compelled to chuse what is either the most useful or the most agreeable to us. We cannot love pain, and abhor pleasure."

"Do we not, sometimes, prefer pain to pleasure?"

"Yes, Fanny; but it is always to procure to ourselves a greater, or a more lasting pleasure. In that case, the idea of a more considerable good determines us, necessarily, to deprive ourselves of a lesser. It is not a lover who gives his mistress the charms that captivate him—he is not, therefore, at liberty to love her. We resist our desires, Fanny, when the motives to gratify them are not so powerful

powerful as those which command the sacrifice of them—but then our resistance is necessary.—A woman who is more fond of the public esteem than of her lover, necessarily repels the temptation of making him happy. Like our affections, our judgments, true or false, are not free; they are the necessary effect of the ideas we have received. For this reason, it is both absurd and inhuman to persecute a man for his religious opinions, since he could not chuse the parents who gave him life, nor be at liberty to adopt or reject their opinions. Born in Turkey, or upon the banks of the Ganges—educated in a family, the votaries either of *Brama* or *Mahomet*, would it have lain in my power to be a Christian? Nature, Fanny, does not consult us concerning the country and the parents she gives us—

Our acquired ideas, our opinions, our sentiments, true or false, are the necessary consequences of the education we receive."

"Since the actions of men are necessary, what right has society to punish them?"

"If the wicked, Fanny, obey necessarily the impulses of a depraved nature, society in punishing them acts also necessarily, through the desire of securing their lives and property."

"What can rectify errors that are necessary?"

"The errors of men, Fanny, are the necessary effects of their ignorance, which would soon vanish before experience, reflection, and philosophy, were not a few men interested to keep truth and reason chained at the feet of superstition and folly."

Some

Some company coming in, my mother left me, musing upon the singularity of our conversation. Her sentiments were new to my mind, and I was equally pleased with the audacity and truth of them.

“It becomes me,” said I to myself, “though a woman, to seek for truth, and to make use of the reason Nature has given me. Ignorance is the source of vice—Knowledge is the friend of virtue—it is a dignity to human Nature, and clears it from the foibles arising from pride, obstinacy, and thoughtlessness.—The study of morality must necessarily make the man or woman who applies to it, just, humane, virtuous, and an enemy to confusion and disorder. Should it not be always productive of that good, it must, however, inspire us with a respect

of ourselves—and that sentiment is sufficient to make us act with propriety on the stage of life. I am told we are a people of philosophers, whilst the rest of the world is immersed in errors, almost deified by their tyrants and priests—Happy country! where we may think, reason, and boast the knowledge of truth—where we have no other master than the laws—where the law binds equally the prince and his subjects.—In London only I can acquire the knowledge I want—it shall not be my fault if I am not soon a proficient in it.”

The ambition of becoming a philosopher elevated my soul—I blushed for my past wanderings, and promised my reason she should, for the future, obtain a victory over my passions.

C H A P. XLVII.

THE preparations for my journey were soon made. As I intended, on my arrival in London, to put on the dress *a-la mode*, I left Betsy heir to my wardrobe—Betsy was not vain.

“Your present,” said she to me, with tears in her eyes, “will not console me for your absence; when I have found a true friend in my sister, it is a torment to part with her.”

“Though absent, dear Betsy, you shall be the object of my care.—Fortune, who smiles upon me, will not forsake you—make yourself worthy of a higher situation in life.—Indulge the spirit of independency—it will encourage you to adorn yourself with virtue and knowledge.—

Confide your thoughts, your opinions, your feelings, to my mother—you will find in her reason and experience, the instructions you could only with the greatest difficulty receive, either from books or reflection. Your first lover, Betsy, is the characteristic of almost every man.—Let not your senses be captivated before your reason approve your sensibility.—Shut your ears to flattery—if that language does not correspond with your own opinion of yourself, despise the man who speaks it, for he intends to deceive you.—Only fools are credulous, Betsy—The woman of sense knows the praises she deserves—no other homage will she welcome—her discretion will always protect her modesty, and successfully oppose the art of men. I love you, Betsy, and am sincerely interested in your happiness
—rise

—rise superior to your present circumstances, by your manners and character—believe me, you shall soon have a claim to the hand of men, who now hold you and me in the greatest contempt.”

Betsy did not thank me for the fortune I promised, but for the counsels; “As,” said she, “they would make her discreet and virtuous, though she should be frustrated in her expectations of a happier state.”

I took a hundred pounds out of the compliment paid me by Mr. C——, and left the surplus in the hands of my mother, resolved that six hundred should be the portion of my sister, whenever she should find an honest man deserving of it. The night after, with my jewels and the two thousand pound bank notes, I set out with my mother for London. Having met with neither lovers nor highwaymen

men upon the road, I arrived in London with my heart, jewels, and notes. We took an elegant first-floor at an haberdasher's in King street, Covent-garden. We had not been a quarter of an hour in possession of it, when the mistress of the house, a young, pert, coquettish woman, flounced into the dining-room to tell us she was immensely vexed she could not entertain us at tea—Had she been *pre-acquainted* with our arrival, she would not have *pre-engaged* herself to go to Drury-lane, even though the *divine* Garrick acted in the *Stratagem*.

“If you are not over-fatigued, ladies, with your journey, I would advise you to come with me; for I *truly* believe that that *divine man* will perform no more this season. What do you say? We have not ten minutes to lose.”

“I am not dressed, Madam.”

“Oh!

"Oh! that does not signify. We will go into a *snug* place where nobody will see you."

"Is it not too late?" asked my mother.

"No, no, I have *retained the front row* of one of the green boxes, and some company wait there for me. Come, the coach is at the door—follow me."

And she rushed toward the stair-case.

"This is not the mistress, but the master of the house," said I to my mother, smiling. "Shall we go?"

"Yes, it will divert you."

We followed Mrs. Lindsey, who, from the bottom of the stair-case was incessant in her "Come then."

The coachman was going to drive, when Mrs. Lindsey desired him to stop.

"Good God!" exclaimed she, "what a giddy

a giddy creature I am! Garrick puts my spirits into such a flutter whenever I am to see him, that he throws my memory into the *extreme* of confusion.—I have forgotten a most material point, ay, the only one I ought not to have forgotten.—Coachman! tell my maid Molly to come here—You will sup with me, ladies—I insist upon it, so not one word about the matter.”

And she ordered Molly to get some fish and a couple of fowls ready against our coming back.

We found a gentleman sitting in the first row of the box.

“What! alone, Sir John?” exclaimed Mrs. Lindsey, seemingly surprised.

“The ladies could not possibly come, madam; they sent me to apologize for them.”

“It

"It happens very well; these ladies will be better accommodated."

We sat down, and Sir John put himself behind Mrs. Lindsey, who familiarly leaning upon his knee, darted such loving and animated looks, that I was soon convinced she had not expected any company with him. The house was full; it was the first time I saw such a numerous and brilliant company. The novelty of the sight diverted my attention from Mrs. Lindsey, and even from the *divine man*, who, though the cause of her coming there, was by her totally neglected and forgotten. The second act had just ended, when after a whisper to Sir John, Mrs. Lindsey on a sudden said her nose bled, and begged of him to help her out of the box.

"I am subject to that accident, ladies, do

do not be frightened—I shall come back in a few minutes.”

And with her handkerchief up to her eyes, she turned round and went away.

“Is not that bleeding of her nose very suspicious, mother?”

“It is an honest pretence to conceal a dishonest action.”

“Poor husbands! how they are used.”

The play was over when Mrs. Lindsey came in.

“Where is Sir John, ladies?”

“We have not seen him since he went with you.”

“That’s very odd—he left me below, and said he would come to you—I thought I should die—that bleeding would never stop—I was obliged to go to an acquaintance in Bow-street.”

How calmly she told the audacious lie!

“I am

"I am provoked to the *height* of despair at having lost the play—was not Garrick *divine, supernatural*, in *Archer*? But *a-propos*, don't tell my husband of the bleeding of my nose, for the dear creature would not fail to send for the doctor, and poison me with medicines for a fortnight."

"Does he love you so much as to be frightened for a trifle?"

"Love me! no; but he would be very glad of an opportunity to keep me at home, that he might oftener go abroad—It is through love for himself that he would appear immensely tender of my health."

"And you live an happy life?"

"Happy to the extreme."

"Without the love of your husband?"

"In your little town of Leicester, the love of a husband may be *necessary* to his wife,

wife, as the fear of detection is a check upon her behaviour—but, in London, sweet creature, we find easily a compensation for the indifference of our husbands—We have ten thousand opportunities they cannot see or prevent.”

“But your matrimonial oath, dear madam!”

“Well, that oath is like every other oath—if one of the parties will break it, the other is not certainly bound by it.—However, though my husband has given me the example, I do not imitate it.—There are very few women, I assure you, who, formed as I am, would not return him the compliment—Would you not forgive them?”

I could not help smiling—The pantomime began, and our conversation ended.

“This is, undoubtedly,” said I to myself,

self, " what I have heard in the country called a *woman of spirit*—bold, indiscreet, and careless of her reputation—she does not know us, and yet has not scrupled to make us confidantes of her foible ! The bleeding of her nose ! It was a compliment paid to our delicacy."—" I hope that such a compliment is not the sole virtue of a tradesman's wife."

Before the pantomime was quite over, Mrs. Lindsey said, " let us go, that we may avoid the crowd, and get a coach." We followed her.

Molly had obeyed the commands of her mistress ; we sat down, almost as soon as we came in, to a neat and elegant supper.

" Where is your husband, Madam ?" said my mother.

" My husband, Madam ! Are you a stranger

stranger to the life of a tradesman? Lard, Ma'am, my husband has not twenty times given me the honour of his company at supper, ever since I have been married to him. From eight o'clock in the evening till twelve, and sometimes till six in the morning, he is at a club in a publick house, where he talks politics, plays at cards, smokes three or four pipes, and plentifully replenishes himself with beer and punch. From thence he generally comes drunk, scolds the maids, kicks dogs and cats, finds fault with whatever I do or say, and would beat me, were he not afraid my screamings should call up the watch and the neighbours. When he awakes, the gentleman complains of an head-ach, breakfasts in his bed, and seldom appears in the shop before eleven. After a few hours attendance on his business,

ness, he steps into a coffee-house to read the news papers, and approve or censure the measures of the administration; then he comes to dinner with a friend. The bottle circulates, when Madam is desired to breathe the fresh air in the corner of the shop. This is, ladies, the life led by almost every tradesman. Do you think a young and sensible woman extremely happy with a husband of that disposition? What woman, in the name of reason, can sit alone five or six hours every night by her chimney-corner? Made of flesh and blood, how can she help seeking abroad for the pleasures he will not procure her at home? We want nothing at home! Does that make amends for the neglect and brutish behaviour of a husband? What signifies a good supper, if I am to eat it by myself? The most sumptuous banquet

banquet would not tempt me, did nobody else partake of it. Come, ladies, eat heartily—No more of husbands : such as they are in this age, they are not worthy of our attention.”

The picture Mrs. Lindsey drew of her husband, inclined me to excuse her behaviour ; and I am not afraid to appeal to the reason of the sensible men, for a confirmation of the judgment I pronounced in her favour. When husbands will not make their wives happy, ought they to wonder at their deviation from virtue ? Who will dare to answer in the affirmative ? The fools, the fools only.—The man of sense knows too well the human heart, not to forgive women the foibles necessarily created by the contempt of their husbands.

C H A P. XLVIII.

HAD not Mrs. Lindsey attempted to ape the woman of fashion, she would have been exceedingly agreeable; but her endeavour to appear easy and gracefully impertinent, made her the more conspicuously ridiculous. Her affectation spoiled her wit, and a countenance which Nature had formed more for voluptuousness than for dignity. She was of a middle stature, and had in her looks and the tone of her voice, a sweetness extremely pleasing. Her dress was friendly to pleasure, and her gesture the expression of it. In this respect only she resembled the celebrated beauties within the hemisphere of St. James's.

“Mrs. Lindsey,” said my mother to

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I

me,

me, "is to the woman of quality, what the English *macaroni* is to the French *petit maitre*—a detestable copy of an excellent original. The last derives his graces from Nature; the first borrows them from art."

"A tradesman's wife performing the part of a woman of rank, is certainly the satire of the manners of the age."

"Vanity, Fanny, like an epidemical disorder, has infected every head; few will keep to the character of their stations in society. The dress, the manners, and the pleasures of the great, all will adopt and enjoy. What is play to men of birth or fortune, is commonly death to the citizens. Hence so many families, in happy circumstances, are daily reduced to misery, through the absurd and contemptible ambition of figuring among
their

their superiors, and attracting the publick attention. I have heard Lord Litt—on say, Fanny, that such a revolution in our manners, was ominous to the grandeur and prosperity of the nation, that it would bring a total change in our government, and turn, one day, a free-born people into the most abject slaves upon earth. That great man, Fanny, calculated the process and degree, at which our effeminacy would be followed by a contempt of liberty, and a surrender of the invaluable rights we have inherited from our ancestors. As the depravity is general, there is no hope of a reformation, because luxury, dissipation, and pleasure enervate our minds, corrupt our souls, and extinguish every virtue in our hearts. If Lady Spelmer should be so happy as to be visited by Lord Litt—on,

I would have you, Fanny, listen attentively to that intelligent and learned personage. Wisdom dwells on his lips—He is, with Lord Chest——, the glory of England, and an honour to human reason.”

My mother might have spoken an hour longer, I should not have interrupted her. How glad was I to find in her the Mentor I wanted !

“ We must not part,” said I, embracing her with the utmost tenderness.

“ Your conversation becomes too agreeable and interesting.—You are necessary to the plan I have formed of acquiring knowledge. Leave Leicester, and settle in London ; the presents of Mr. C—— will procure a capital of fifteen hundred pounds—Place two thirds in trade, and keep the surplus for casualties—With
your

your prudence and œconomy, that sum will be sufficient—Choose the business most agreeable to your fancy, or the most adapted to your abilities—My sister and I will be your partners. In that independent situation, dear mother, you shall be at liberty to assume your true character, and to attend to the education of your daughters. Every hour I shall be able to spare at Lady Spelmer's, I will spend with you. You must not refuse me, for I am determined you shall comply with this scheme."

"You have anticipated my wishes, dear Fanny—you have lately so much endeared yourself to me by your behaviour and generosity, that my happiness consists in living with you. As soon as I have satisfied the creditors of your father, and disposed of the little property I

have at Leicester, I will come back to London."

"Your condescension makes me supremely happy."

I was really so; I considered her less as a mother than as a true friend; and, in that light, she added to my gratitude and tenderness for her.

In a few days, with the help of Mrs. Lindsey, who was an adept in the knowledge of modes and fashions, I was able to appear with decency and elegance before Lady Spelmer. Mrs. Lindsey brought me to several mantua-makers, "who," said she, "sold forty per cent. dearer to the nobility, because they often stood in need of their friendship and discretion."

"Discretion, Madam! what do you mean?"

Mrs.

Mrs. Lindsey smiled.

“When you have been some time at Lady Spelmer’s, you will probably know my meaning.”

“As it is only a probability, I beg you would satisfy my curiosity.”

“Well, Miss, most of the mantua-makers are polite ladies, whose apartments are always *graciously* open to the women of fortune, who, unknown to their husbands, will have a few minutes conversation with their lovers.”

“Why should not any other house be as convenient to them?”

“For this very important reason; here they come in the day-time, and with their retinue; may stay an hour, and go back unsuspected. In another house, an intrigue cannot be so easily conducted. A woman must either bribe all her servants,

or expose herself to a discovery. At a mantua-maker's, a lady is led from the shop into a back-parlour, and from thence into a first floor, without any body knowing any thing of the matter."

"Since, Madam, you are so conversant with the manners of women of quality, I hope you are equally so in those of a tradesman's wife. Be so good as to tell me if she has also her mantua-makers. You may talk freely; upon my honour I will not betray you."

"As I think you as honest a woman as ever breathed, I will be sincere with you. Our lovers are not commonly rich enough to give an interview at a mantua-maker's; nor can we, but seldom, find an opportunity of meeting with them, without the countenance of a confident, in equal need of our support. Two women, under the
pretence

pretence of a walk in the park, of a visit to a distant place in the city or Westminster, go in one of those public gardens devoted to pleasure, where, for a few shillings, they are at liberty to sacrifice to the deity. The play is another convenient place, from whence, when husbands are getting drunk in a club, wives steal into a bagnio."

At the words play and bagnio I smiled.

"You are a wicked creature—you ought not to have such an excellent memory."

"Are those all the places dangerous to a husband?"

"No, no. God forbid we should be limited to so narrow a circle! We have, often, in our houses, the means of revenge against the injurious neglect of our husbands. Among our lodgers, we some-

times find a worthy avenger of the injury done to us. I have known a young lady, who, through the want of a better opportunity, converted a hackney-coach into a temple to Cupid. We tradesmen's wives are reduced to such miserable shifts as would astonish you. Women of fashion may go abroad whenever they please, without the company of a friend or of a husband; that prerogative we do not enjoy."

"All the tradesmen's wives do not behave in that manner?"

"Those husbands who continue lovers, meet with a grateful return.—Women happy at home, are generally constant, faithful, and virtuous; but who will blame the deviations of those, who are regarded by their husbands in no other light, than as the useless furniture of their houses?"

houses? With a young husband, to live the life of a widow! Is not this intolerable, exasperating? A neglected and despised wife is like the poor wretch who seeks to retrieve his deplorable condition, she will exert all her abilities to sweeten the bitters of life—nay, to change them into pleasures.”

Could I tell her she was wrong? No! Moralists! it is your business to convince her of it.

“There is an alteration in your deportment and conversation that surprises me. The first time I saw you, I thought you a *female coxcomb*.”

“I perceived your contempt, and corrected myself. Had I known you to be a woman of sense, I should not have played the fool. In my society, affectation is wit, and silence a want of judg-

ment. Should I behave or speak with a graceful simplicity in the company of the women I frequent, I should be to them what a prude is in an assembly of women of gallantry, the object of laughter, ridicule, or contempt."

"Have you any prudes among you?"

"Yes; but they differ totally from those in the polite world. You might easily mistake our prudes for their coquettes, and our coquettes for their prudes. These are of an austere and melancholy complexion, ours of a gay and sentimental turn. They will say No again and again, and, at the same time, act as if they had said Yes. Our coquetry consists more in the art of concealing our indiscretions, than in the desire of pleasing."

"You have, undoubtedly, a very great respect for religion."

"Most

"Most undoubtedly. We go every Sunday to church, to hear a sermon upon a text we do not understand, and which the doctor, as ignorant as ourselves, labours for twenty minutes to make as plain and intelligible as he can. The rest of the week, business, husbands, lovers, cards, plays, quarrels, reconciliations, slander, take their vicissitudes, and occupy all our time."

"You believe in the immortality of the soul?"

"I have heard of that word, but, upon honour, I know not what it means. However, if it be true, I shall be very glad of it, for we certainly deserve in the next world a compensation for the miseries of this. Pray, dear Miss Ramsay, let us change our conversation; it is absurd to talk of what we do not understand.

Will

Will you go to the opera this evening?"

"With all my heart."

"I'll send for a French hair-dresser."

"Can no Englishman dress hair?"

"As well as any *Monsieur*; but the fashion—"

"Hang the fashion; send for one of my countrymen."

"Good God!" exclaimed I, when she had left me, "what a world this is! What a vast theatre of wisdom and folly, of virtues and vices!" I leave the reader to make his reflections upon my conversation with Mrs. Lindsey; I am not so bold as to undertake the task for him.

C H A P. XLIX.

AFTER three hours exertion of all his powers, to make a head a wonderful piece of art, the hair-dresser made me a most frightful figure. The toupee rose pyramidically to the height of nine inches, and was so slightly supported by the curls on the sides, that it threatened to tumble at the least motion of my head.

“ You have made me, Sir, the ugliest creature in nature. I will not go out with that monstrous fabric on my head.— It is so heavy with pomatum and powder, that, in spite of myself, it obliges me to stoop.”

“ All the ladies, madam, wear their hair in that manner—it is the reigning taste.”

“ All the ladies, Sir, have my leave to
be

be as ridiculous as they please—but I will not disgrace my features in favour of fashion. This dress is certainly invented, that there should be no sensible difference between an ugly and a pretty woman.—Lord, how I look!—I hardly know myself.”

I turned to my mother; she burst into laughter.

“That is a most Christian dress; for it plainly declares a contempt of beauty; under that form, Fanny, you will neither tempt, nor be tempted; though a friend to virtue, it is an enemy to Nature, whose partiality for our country-women, does not deserve from them, such an ungrateful return. One would think they are ashamed to be handsome, so much art they employ in deforming themselves.”

“Pray,

"Pray, Sir, reduce that pyramid to a plain toupee."

The hair-dresser complied, but with reluctance. I saw his fondness for the structure he had reared, in the slow manner with which he destroyed it. "What a pity!" exclaimed he, every time he took a pin away. "Indeed, madam, you will repent, when, at the opera, you will see every head differ so essentially from yours. Consider, before it is too late."

"I am resolved, Sir."

"Be it so—upon honour it is a pity."

And, always murmuring, he gave my hair the form I wanted it to take. This interesting business over, I asked Mrs. Lindsey if she knew any adept in music, who would accompany us at the opera?"

"I know, Miss, a gentleman, who has been long in France and Italy; he has a
fine

fine voice, and plays exquisitely upon the violin. I will send him a card, if you please: though a man of fortune, he has no pride."

"Do, dear Madam. The company of a judge of an entertainment, of which I have no knowledge, will be very grateful to me."

I had just finished my toilette, when two gentlemen were introduced by Mrs. Lindsey; as their deportment and manners were truly English, the compliments were short on both sides; and we sat down in a friendly manner to a dish of tea.

"Do you understand Italian, Madam?" said Mr. R——.

"No, Sir; but I am told I have no need of it."

"It is an error, Madam, credited by some people of fashion, who, to conceal
their

their ignorance, arrogate to themselves the legislative power over all objects relative to taste or pleasure. I make no doubt but they will soon oblige the composers to substitute notes to words, and have them recited, or sung, by the performers of the opera. This alteration would be the more judicious, as it would favour their vanity, and be productive of the same melodious sounds. Should the Italian poets be deficient in delicacy, feeling, and sublimity of thought, I would move the English audience to adopt the innovation, as their attention, no longer divided, would then be entirely taken up with the charms of harmony. But *Metastasio*, and their other dramatic writers, are so excellent in their manner, that, since our great men will have an Italian opera, they ought, certainly, to know the language in which it is executed. Should there be
found

found a buffoon, able to mimic *Othello* or *Macbeth*, could he display their characters, and warm your breast with their passions, as forcibly as *Garrick*? the Italian music is that buffoon.—The personages of the drama are lost in the musician, who, alone, delights or terrifies our souls. It is not *Adrian* or *Semiramis* we see upon the stage, but a *Signior* and a *Signora*, who, attempting to captivate our ears, murder the character they perform. An Italian opera, Madam, is the only entertainment in England, in which the mind has no share.—It is entirely for the benefit of the senses—and the diversion of our fools of quality.”

“ Since they are so extremely fond of music, why do not they unite the useful with the agreeable? Is it impossible to have English music?”

“ No,

“No, Madam, but the prejudice runs so high, in favour of the Italians, against the English, that I am afraid our people of fashion will never have sense enough to exterminate it, and do us justice. The Italians are, undoubtedly, superior in the art of music; but their excellence is neither the effect of their climate, nor of a happier conformation, or of a more exquisite sensibility in their organs. Before they were encouraged by great men, they were what we are.—The spirit of emulation followed the hope of reward—Once honoured, and well paid, their genius soared above mediocrity, and soon was the creator of a music, which is still the delight and admiration of the whole world. It is with music, Madam, as with all the other liberal arts—protected, they rise into perfection—neglected, they sink, like an unjustly disgraced minister—to be the satire

tire of the prince, and the sport of a mob of quality. But it begins to be late; we will talk of this another time."

"It shall then be no longer than this night; for, I hope, gentlemen, you will favour us with your company at supper."

"I accept your invitation, Madam," said Mr. R——; "but, I think, Charles is engaged."

"I do not remember any engagement," answered his friend, "when I am in agreeable company."

"This compliment, Charles, thou wilt not to-morrow give as an excuse to Mrs. F——."

"When women will not hear truth, a man ought not to speak it to them."

"Nor ought he to love them," said Mr. R——, "when he knows such a defect in them."

"As

“As we always love before we have a motive to esteem, and also despise, it is not easy to submit our affection to the dictates of reason.”

“Pshaw! pshaw!” exclaimed Mr. R—— getting up, “the heart of a sensible man, does not certainly feel like that of a fool.—Let a woman be ever so handsome, the impression she makes must vanish before the certainty of her being unworthy of our attachment.”

“You reason as a man who does not love—leave me my sensibility, James; I do not envy your indifference.”

“It pains me to see thee the dupe of thy heart—Friendship bids me to reclaim thee from thy error.”

“That error is a delight—I would hate you, James, should you rob me of it.”

“Since thou art pleased with thy dis-
ease,

ease, I will not attempt the cure of it. To love a coquette! zounds! can there be a more egregious folly than that? Of all the female characters, it is the most odious and contemptible."

His friend smiled.

"Your satire, James, is no remedy against the pleasures of sentiment—Some prude will, perhaps, one day revenge Mrs. F—— for your dislike to her. Lady B——"

"Lady B——! she is one of the most sensible, modest, and virtuous women in England."

"She has wit, undoubtedly; but your prejudice in favour of her modesty and virtue, is at least as foolish as my attachment to Mrs. F——. As I love Mrs. F——, though sensible of her imperfections, I deserve your raillery; but your
advantage

advantage over me is chimerical, since you are yet a stranger to the character of Lady B——, only because you do not chuse to be acquainted with it.—Forgive, Ladies, a conversation so uninteresting to you."

He was mistaken; I had listened with pleasure to their conversation. Whatever tended to give me an insight into the human heart, and to unfold the nature of our passions, was a subject which demanded all my attention. Mr. R——, his friend, and their mistresses, were characters worthy of my philosophical reflections. My mother having desired to be left at home, I whispered to her a few words about the supper, and then set out for the opera.

CHAPTER L

INSTEAD of an hackney-coach, I found at the door an elegant equipage, with two livery-servants. My heart fluttered, not through vanity, that sensation had already in my heart given way to honest pride, but through the fear of appearing to belong to the proprietor of it. I retreated back a few steps, and taking Mrs. Lindsey apart——

“That coach, Madam, will make us too conspicuous; it carries slander with it.”

“This is new, perfectly new,” said Mrs. Lindsey, bursting into laughter.— And, calling Mr. R——, she told him my reflection.

“Were you not going to such a public
place

place as the opera," said Mr. R——,
 "your scruple, Madam, would be rational; but, on such an occasion, decorum is always over-ruled by conveniency."

"I am not a prude, Sir; but I think a gentleman's carriage is no friend to the reputation of the woman who accepts of it, especially when she is in a station of life inferior to him."

"Your manners and modesty, madam, fill up the distance; no body can perceive it.—Though I admire your delicacy," added he smiling, "I will not, at present, approve of it."

And taking me respectfully by the hand, he led me to the coach.

The women who will call my scruple impertinent, are either strangers to the manners of the world, or affect not to know them, that they may indulge their
 K 2 vanity.

vanity. Men of fashion, though men of honour, endanger as much the fair fame of a virgin, as any rake or buck: when they associate with women of my class, the latter become necessarily the natural objects of slander. There is a line between those men and us, drawn by opinion, and the difference of birth and fortune, which they cannot pass over without bringing a disgrace upon us. "What, but love or pleasure, could form a connection, unauthorised by custom, and prohibited by the pride of men? Would a man descend from his rank, renounce the society of his friends, and glory in an intimacy with us, were not that intimacy necessary to his happiness?" Such, young women, are the reflections which, though they do not deprive you of your virtue, rob you of your reputation, which, in this age, is the reality of it.

To an ear unacquainted with the Italian language, the opera can procure but a half-satisfactory delight, always blended with a sensation of disgust. I will compare it to a book, in which good thoughts are so scarce, that you cannot find one but after the perusal of ten pages of nonsense. The interval between the songs is filled up by so tedious a monotone, so dull a repetition of the same sounds, that the beauties of an *arieta* hardly compensates for the mortal languor of the *recitative*.

I was soon convinced that the audience did not wish, in an opera, for the illusions which they require upon an English stage.

The *Signora*, who represented *Berenice* was commanded by a repeated *encore*, to sing again a favourite *arieta*. The mistress of *Titus* was forcibly divested of her dignity, and sunk into the mean character of a

slave to the caprice of an *unsentimental* public.

I sincerely believe, that if the pit at *Drury-lane* were composed of men of fashion, they would see *Garrick* in *Hamlet*, and insist upon his repeating the famous soliloquy of "*To be, or not to be, &c.*" When will their whims give way to sentiment, and their false taste be corrected by the charm of a rational pleasure?

My reflections upon the opera were often interrupted by those of my vanity.

In so brilliant an assembly, where every woman vied with each other in beauty and elegance of dress, I was remarked. A whisper in my favour circulated in the gallery, and I perceived in the countenance of Mr. R—, that he was sensible of

the homage paid me. His respect dwindled into a sentimental attention; and he attempted, several times, to divert me from

the pleasure of being admired. I thought the conduct of Mr. R—— more offensive than flattering; and my reservedness increased in proportion to the delicacy of his manners. The modesty of my looks opposed the coquetry of his deportment. —Young women, let my behaviour be yours, when you are with men in public; beware of their art and pride; the most indifferent of them is often the most ambitious of appearing a man of gallantry, and of staking his honour against your reputation. Through a thoughtless vanity, encourage not a conduct, whose consequences may cover them with glory, and you with dishonour. From your imprudent smiles drops a morsel for envy or malignity—It is the interest of most women to censure—Expect no justice from those who want your indulgence; for their contempt of you is always profitable to themselves.

Among the gentlemen who had ho-

noured me with a look expressive of my pleasing them, one in particular attracted my regard.—He was about thirty, and had the noblest physiognomy I ever beheld. There was an elegance in his person, a decency in his countenance, a sensibility in his features, no one else exhibited to my eye. He, alone, excited my curiosity; to him alone I wished to appear agreeable. I know not whether my glances told him the indiscreet wish; but to the end of the opera, I was the sole object of his attention. He had bowed to Mr. R——; my asking his name might have betrayed a concern—Prudence suggested me the means of knowing it.

“Is it, Sir,” said I to Mr. R——, “a rule of the modern politeness to stare indecently at women?”

“It is an air in the fop, despised by men of honour.”

“The gentleman who, this moment,
bowed

bowed to you, has not the carriage of a fop, yet his eyes are obstinately bent upon me."

"Sir Henry Fentam, Madam, is a man of discretion and honour, he does not intend to offend; forgive him the pleasure of gazing upon a lovely woman."

"Fanny Ramsay," said I to myself, "remember what thou art; think no more of Sir Henry."

My reason refused to obey. We were leaving the opera-house, when Sir Henry drew near us, and whispered some words to Mr. R—. As the coach was at the door, their conversation was short.

"Sir Henry, Madam," said Mr. R— to me, "desired me to tell him who you are, and where you live."

"Foolish questions," exclaimed I.

"Thinking them so, I have given him a false name, and a false direction."

"I am glad of it."

It was a lie. I was displeased, though,

at the same time, I was conscious of the necessity of remaining unknown to him. The homage of Mr. S— had not added to my vanity—Sir Henry was so handsome, that I could not flatter myself that I should force from him the tender of his hand.—A man, in his person, distinguishingly favoured by Nature, is commonly fond of his liberty—certain of pleasing, he can cull the flowers of pleasure, without exposing himself to their thorns.—An intimacy with him, founded upon liberalism, my pride rejected. I was no longer the poor Fanny Ramfay—as I could live independent, and was in search of knowledge and wisdom, I thought I ought to live virtuous, and brave the feelings of Nature.

"Thinking then, I have given him a false name, and a false question."
 "I am glad of it."

C H A P. LL.

UNwilling that my guests should discover the new sentiments in my heart—more unwilling still to feed them with reflection, I endeavoured to shake off the idea of Sir Henry, and was so lucky as to succeed in the attempt. Animated by my gaiety, Mr. R— and his friend supported us with wit, humour, and decency. A woman of the first rank could not have obtained from them more deference and respect. Mr. R— behaved as if desirous of pleasing me—Mr. W— as if desirous of meriting my esteem—Mrs. Lindsey partook in our conversation, and often enlivened it with the fallies of a sprightly and discreet imagination. This woman could, in the easiest manner, rise or sink her soul to the *ton* of her company. With her hus-

band and his friends, she was the child of affectation and folly; with us, she was a graceful and sensible creature.

"How did you like the opera, Madam?" said Mr. R—.

"I almost repent, Sir, the hours I gave to it. Since we are upon that subject, is it your opinion that we might have English music?"

"It is my opinion, Madam. Would the government establish an academy of music, and give premiums and honours to the adepts in that art, we should not be long in the necessity of borrowing them from Italy. It is only through want of encouragement, that the liberal arts are in a languishing state in this nation. Had we no philosophers, no mathematicians, no orators, we should be justly called the savages of Europe."

"Have we no other advantages to boast?"

"Yes.

"Yes. We have the best navy-officers and seamen in the world."

"Are we not famed for the wisdom of our laws?"

"As much as for the partiality with which we exercise them. We have a great many lawyers, and very few judges."

"You must confess we have excellent poets?"

"That we have had, I will allow—that we have at present, I cannot grant."

"Are not so many new plays, performed every year, a proof against your opinion?"

"They are, rather, a confirmation of it. They consist, in general, of old characters, old incidents, and old catastrophes, vamped out in the language and the dress of the day. You will find in them neither novelty, nor imagination, nor fire. The most successful among them, are either translated from the French

French plays, or a compilation from them. As to the poetry, it has not always even the dignity of prose. We have some dramatic authors, and not one "poet—nor even an historian *."

“What is the cause of this revolution in our literature?”

“The same that impedes the progress of music, architecture, and painting—the want of encouragement. In France, a *Crébillon* and a *Voltaire* are honoured by the king, respected by the great, almost adored by the whole nation.—Here, men of equal abilities, would be without friends, without protectors, without the hope of seeing a purse open to relieve them in their distresses †. French noblemen glory in their esteem of a man of parts; they welcome him to their tables,

* Had Mr. Helvetius never heard of our Hume, and Robertson, and Lyttelton.

† In England, the only patrons and encouragers of literature are the bookfellers.

introduce

introduce him to the world, and admit him into their parties of pleasure. Our noblemen, Madam, are of a different cast; they value only those authors who are in the pay of government, or in the opposition.—A political writer, useful to their party, would, at present, be preferred to a *Dryden*, a *Locke*, and a *Newton*. Their fortune is bestowed upon horses, dogs, flatterers, and courtezans. They have no gold to promote industry, to encourage talents, to reward the man of merit; nay, not even to support the dignity of their rank, which they often prostitute at a horse-race, and the gaming-table. Their public contempt of their countrymen prevails still more in their private life. Foreigners only obtain their confidence—they only they employ—in them only they find taste and merit. From thence results the ruin of our manufactories,

manufactories, and the decay of trade and ingenuity."

"They must certainly have a motive for taking foreigners into their service."

"It is founded, Madam, upon the extreme complaisance of the French, whom misery, or the desire of getting a fortune, import continually into London. Being always ready servilely to obey the caprices, and submit to the whims of our noblemen, they easily gain over them an ascendancy, which cannot be obtained by an honest Englishman. This will only do what he ought to do; the other has no reason but the will of his master. A voluntary slave is a more useful servant to men corrupted by prosperity, than the man who centers himself in the circle of his duties, and carries in his servitude the spirit of independency.—As to our men of fashion purchasing from the French
their

their dress, and the furniture of their houses, I attribute it to their poverty."

"Poverty! you are not in earnest?"

"Riches, Madam, in the hands of fools, spendthrifts, or gamesters, are like parts in the man who turns them to his disadvantage. Weak heads, or corrupted hearts, are under the sway of folly, caprice, or pleasure. People of this unlucky complexion are forcibly led into extravagancies, which they neither can avoid, nor would even prevent, should a friend make them sensible of the fatal consequences that attend them. I will not call that man rich, who, with ten thousand a year, will venture that sum, and often the double of it, at *bazard*, or upon race-horses. Men who, to gratify a whim, expose themselves to the necessity of applying to usurers, or of mortgaging their estates, must, in the essential and superfluous articles of life, go to the
cheapest

cheapest market. For this reason, the fair trader in London is robbed of the advantages of his honest industry by the smuggler, and the indigent man of fashion who countenances him."

"Are there no laws against those enemies of our country's prosperity?"

"We have some, Madam; but they are not severe enough to stop the evil.

Their lenity is a defect in the legislature, which ought to make no difference between the man of fashion, who dresses in

foreign silks, velvets, brocades, gold lace, and cambrick, and the receiver of stolen goods. Should it be felony to encourage

the French manufactures at the expence of ours, our trade, from the despicable state to which it is reduced, would rise

superior to that of all the European nations. Then we should not see the most

useful members of the community poor through the want of work, or emigrate from

from England through the want of bread."

"Can no remedy be found?"

"The criminals are our legislators; can you expect they will enact a law against themselves?"

"Have we no patriots to make a motion so favourable to the interest and glory of the nation?"

"Modern patriots, Madam, are like discarded lovers, who abuse their mistresses because they could not obtain their favours. The good of their country is only a pretence to get a place, a pension, or a title. Patriotism yields generally the arms to prerogative, when the royal favours are bestowed upon the person who assumed the mask of it."

"What is become of the integrity and public virtue of our ancestors?"

"They must have been buried with them, or have retired into some of our

West-

West-Indian colonies. The present representatives of the people do not even wear their masks; they scorn all hypocrisy, and act without disguise, agreeably to the dictates of self-interest. The world, Madam, is a farce, in which all men play a part, adapted to their wants or passions."

"Is not religion a check upon them?"

"I do not know how it happens, Madam; but religion is generally forgotten when it is in opposition to the interests of love, avarice, or ambition. Besides, there are so many contradictory religions upon earth, that sensible men, conscious there can be but one true, and equally conscious that they want discernment to discover it, are often tempted to be influenced, only by their reason, in the actions of their lives."

"Do not all the religions preach the practice of virtue and the love of our country?"

"Those

“Those precepts belong to every religion, but they are not so unanimous in their opinions of them. Every where virtue is alternately held up to our veneration or contempt, according to the differences of our religions or governments. Religious virtues seldom agree with those of society—and both are at a perpetual war with the laws of Nature. In France, celibacy is a virtue; here it is considered as a vice. Passive obedience to the commands of their princes, is a virtue prescribed by the Romish clergy to all the nations under their communion—here we are ordered to obey the laws only. You see, Madam, that the practice of the sublimest virtue in France is here in detestation, and that the love of their country consists in their submission to their king; when in England we are free, and governed only by the laws. I will give you no more than two instances;

in

in which the French and we are a contrast to each other, upon two points the most important to religion and society. They are sufficient to convince you, that though all religions preach the practice of virtue and the love of our country, they differ so essentially in their notions of them, that a man of sense is authorized not to regulate his conduct by what they prescribe or forbid. When the man of sense happens to be stimulated by the thirst of riches or glory, be assured he will not hesitate to prefer the goods of this world to the uncertainty of the everlasting bliss promised to him."

"Can the man of sense, Sir, be esteemed or trusted, who shall have no religion?"

"That man, Madam, will have two religions, one for himself, and the other for the public. In his heart he will be a deist, and in appearance he will adopt the religion of his prince."

"Why

"Why the religion of his prince, and not that of the quaker, the anabaptist, or the presbyterian?"

"Because, in that religion alone, he can obtain riches, honours, or preferments."

"This a conversation for a supper!" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsey. "Upon honour, you shall talk no longer upon such grave and melancholy subjects. I will give you a song."

"A song!" said Mr. W—— smiling; and he looked at his watch. "Two o'clock! it is Sunday; will you transgress the law?"

"Aye, aye, and without scruple. Singing is no crime; I am sure of it."

"How do you spend the Sundays in London, Sir?"

"Men and women of rank, Madam," answered Mr. W——, "devote them to visits and slander—some of them, more bold,

bold, keep their routs as usual. The citizens go to church in the morning, and to the bagnio or the public house in the evening. The lower class spend them in every kind of debauchery."

"What a picture! is it faithful?"

"Indeed, Madam, it is but too true. Sundays are consecrated to vice. Should the diversions allowed in the week be permitted on a Sunday, the people would preserve their health and their morals, which, through idleness, fall a sacrifice to libertinism and drunkenness. What would you have them do to fill up hours that hang heavy upon their hands, when they are not suffered to trifle them away in any innocent amusement? Will young men, after a week's painful attendance to business, shut themselves in their houses to pray, or read the scriptures from morning to night? No, it is not in that solemn occupation they could find a remedy

medy for their exhausted spirits. Like thirsty travellers, they want a cool spring to refresh themselves ; they want a happy day after six days of misery ; and when the legislators deny it to them, is it a wonder they should abuse the few hours of liberty it is in their power to enjoy ? Singing, dancing, manly exercises, would prevent them from contracting vicious habits ; would divert them from every thought and care, and make them, the next morning, begin again, with a cheerful heart, the drudgeries of life."

"How is it abroad ?"

"The reverse of what it is in England : The Sundays are consecrated to devotion and pleasure ; they reign alternately, and keep the people from intemperance and immorality."

"No more of your fine digressions," said Mrs. Lindsey, "I will sing. Listen to me."

Mrs. Lindsey was in the midst of her song, when her husband came up stairs reeling, and enquiring, with a volley of oaths, for his wife.

"It is my husband," said Mrs. Lindsey, "he is drunk; I'll go and coax him into bed."

Mrs. Lindsey's whining eloquence did not avail her. Good God! What words flowed from her husband's lips! What a brute a drunken man is! In spite of his wife and Molly, Mr. Lindsey forced himself into the room.

"Don't be afraid, ladies," said Mr. R——; "the beast is not mischievous in his madness. A drunken man is an object of curiosity for a philosophical mind."

"Pretty! very pretty indeed—" stammered Mr. Lindsey; "Mr. R——, is it proper to come to my wife in my absence?—Eh!—Do you call that a friendly action?"

tion?—Are there not, without her, wh—s enough in London?”

“The brute!” exclaimed his wife. And she left him to the care of Molly, who, neglectful of her charge, let him drop upon the floor.

“Now,” said Mrs. Lindsey, “we have him safe, for he will not be able to get up.”

“My name is Tom Lindsey—I am as good a gentleman as any one of you—Tom Lindsey sha’n’t be a c—old. By G—d! I will not suffer such doings in my house.”

He spoke for twenty minutes a soliloquy that would have forced an Heraclitus to burst into laughter; and then muttering half broken curses and complaints, he fell into a sound sleep.

“That’s the man,” said Mrs. Lindsey, “I am ordered to love and obey—Is he not a charming and rational creature?”

What maid would think of matrimony, did she fear the chance of having such a husband? What wife will oppose the desire of revenge, when Nature and a man of honour intreat her to indulge it?"

"Could a drunken man," said Mr. W——, "see himself in that situation, he never would twice expose himself to it. Of all the vices, drunkenness is the most odious, as it cannot be justified; for it is in the power of every man not to fall into it. Intoxication is unattended by pleasure. A few glasses enliven the spirits and are agreeable to the palate; a dozen obscure the reason and pall the taste. From that moment, wine or any other liquor no longer procures pleasing sensations; and therefore the man who continues to drink them, sinks below the vilest brute in the creation."

At the desire of Mrs. Lindsey, the servants of Mr. R—— were called up; and they

they conveyed her husband to his apartment.

"Mr. Lindsey, Madam," said Mr. W——, "confirms what I have said about the liberties taken on a Sunday, and is a proof of the bad effects of prejudices in a weak mind. He thinks there is a sin in a game at cards and in a tune upon the harpsichord, and finds none in the indulgence of a passion that deprives him of his reason."

"Morality again!" exclaimed Mrs. Lindsey. "In the name of pleasure have done with it!" We complied, and it was past five when the gentlemen and we parted with mutual regret.

C H A P. LII.

"I Have well employed," said I to my mother, "the time I have been with the gentlemen—What a vast field for reflection have they left me! Have you discovered any errors in their opinions upon the subjects of my curiosity?"

"Not one, Fanny; they have freely told you what every impartial and sensible man thinks in his heart. They were the more ingenuous in their answers to your questions, as they plainly saw you were actuated by the sincere desire of knowing the truth. To that desire, you are indebted for the decency of their behaviour to you. A young woman of merit meets generally with respect, when that sentiment is, as generally, refused to the foolish woman of rank or fortune. Had such a woman been in your place, either the gentlemen

gentlemen would have complimented her with the sacrifice of their reason and discretion, or they would have talked a language unintelligible to each other."

"They would not, certainly, have put on the character of a fool in her favour."

"Any character whatever prudent men will assume, Fanny, rather than offend, or displease. The displeasure of a pretty foolish woman of quality, is the more dangerous to a man of sense, that being, naturally, the object of envy, he could oppose but a few friends, to a world of enemies interested in exposing him to contempt."

"It is a difficult task for the man who, not being conversant in the manners of the world, cannot have the flexibility of mind requisite to accommodate himself to every disposition and character."

"A man of sense, Fanny, possesses always that flexibility, whenever it is con-

venient for him to make use of it. Acquainted with the passions and the foibles of the human heart, his knowledge of them is the rule of his conduct."

"A man of sense ought not to be abject."

"Would you have him starve, or leave to knaves the enjoyment of the goods of this world?"

"What difference is there between him and the knave? I see none."

"A knave, Fanny, is a *principled impostor*, who, guided by self-interest, in every action of his life, acts in defiance to the law, and every sentiment held sacred by society.—The man of sense preys only upon the follies of mankind—they are to him, what the fly is to the spider, and the spider to the swallow, a food ordered for him by Nature."

"Well! is not that the life of a knave?"

"It seems to be so at first sight, Fanny—

It

It is not so in reality. The knave is commonly a sharper, whose claims go often no further than to our purse; but the man of sense pretends to honours, distinction, esteem, friendship, and to a share in our pleasures. You see him under the shape of a flatterer, of a virtuous man, of a slanderer, nay of a lover, agreeably to the character of the men or women whose protection he wants."

"Since, from the highest to the lowest, all wear a mask, and appear what they are not, how can there be so many dupes?"

"Most men, Fanny, wear a mask they are not able to support. The affectation of wit, learning, or virtue, does not secrete the fool, the ignorant, or the hypocrite, from the eye of the wise man, who is interested in the knowledge of their real characters. People of rank, or of an independent fortune, wear no mask, not even that of decency, but upon particular
L 5 occasions,

occasions, and throw it aside when it is no longer of any service to them. A woman will never conceal her sensibility for the pleasures of love—without it, she would appear less amiable and tempting—but her enjoyment of them. All her other passions, which, though more criminal, endanger not her reputation, she uses with more indulgence; none of them will she be at the trouble to keep from us, as we may be necessary in the gratification of them. Men, in general, are not so discreet; being more careless of their honour, than women are of their virtue, they are not so much upon their guard against the censure of the world, and the arts of a dissembler. There will be dupes, Fanny, so long as men or women of sense shall want, what it is in the power of fools to grant.”

“Then morality has no chance to prosper!—

fer!—Between the man of sense and the fool, what friend can protect her?”

“The old, the insensible, all those who can no longer enjoy, or are contented with what they are, or possess, will side in her favour.”

“Such auxiliaries are rather a disgrace, than an honour to her.”

“I cannot help it.”

“Do you think those men virtuous, who are so, because they have it not in their power to sin?”

“I am afraid, Fanny, there are no other virtuous people in the world—When blood runs high in the veins, and inclination unites with the ability of enjoying, pleasure, generally, comes off conqueror over morality.”

“Does not morality often gain the day?”

“Always, Fanny, when the passion that opposed her, is no longer interested in obtaining the victory.”

“Of what service then is reason to us?”

“To prevent us from being the victims of impostors, whose authority is founded upon our ignorance—Powerful against political or religious errors, it is defenceless against the passions. Reason and passions, Fanny, have a separate empire—sometimes they unite; but often act without the concurrence of each other. Our conduct in social life is often submitted to the first—The last are the creators of our pleasures and pains. Could we, at our will, silence either, or make them subservient to each other, we should be independent beings, instead of being the slaves of an over-ruling destiny.”

My mother's want of rest made me discontinue a conversation, which was my delight. The thirst of knowledge was so predominant in me, that my heart was almost dead to the idea of Sir Henry Fentam, and to Mr. R——'s desire of pleas-

ing me.—I remembered the first, without any sensation of pleasure; and the last, only with the cold emotion of gratitude and respect. These sentiments gave way to reflections upon what I had heard; and my sleep was a continuation of them.

I slept to think, and waked to live in thought.

CHAP. LIII.

I Was meditating upon the wonderful changes independency had caused in my mind and heart, and the advantages resulting from the knowledge of the actions, manners, and opinions of men, when Mr. R—— sent his name up. The pleasure of thinking had made me careless of my dress; I was in a deshabille more becoming a votary of Cupid, than a lover of philosophy. The curiosity of knowing whether Nature or Art would make a stronger impression upon the heart of a sensible man, dictated my answer.—Mr. R—— came—Good God, how he looked! He frightened me—his countenance was the real picture of grief.

“Are you not well, Sir?” asked I with a trembling voice; “or have you met with an unexpected misfortune?”

“With

“With a misfortune, dear Madam, the more keen, as it forces me to despise the woman I esteemed the most—I am ashamed of the sensibility I have betrayed—but the wound is so fresh, that indignation has not yet had time to heal it.”

“You love, and have been deceived?”

“In the most cruel manner.—I believe there is not in the world such another profligate, and perfidious wretch. Under the looks of virtue, she conceals a heart devoted to vice.—The most refined courtier, compared to her, is but a child in the art of dissimulation.—Should I tell you what I have seen, your soul would shudder with horror—you would be tempted not to credit me.”

“Is falsehood in woman a phenomenon in the polite world?”

“It is not; and a man ought to be prepared against it. But can a lover be made sensible of the defects of his mistress?”

trefts? Like the religious enthusiast, who submits reason to faith, he finds perfection in the object of his attachment."

"Now, that you know your error, you will easily find a remedy against it in your discretion."

"I have found it, Miss Ramsay, in the contempt with which she has inspired me—My heart no longer beats with love for Lady B——. The sense of my folly is the only torture I endure—I cannot forgive myself the credulity that made me the sport of her hypocrisy."

"You are more vain than tender—had you sincerely loved, the loss of Lady B——, and not vanity, would be the cause of your sorrow."

"It would be so, were I unacquainted with the infamy of her behaviour—but after the part she has acted before me, she has necessarily lost all her title to my esteem and tenderness.—Love fled forcibly from

from my heart, to make room for indifference and contempt."

"Is a lover a judge of the conduct of his mistress? Jealousy has caused your vexation: you will repent it when you see Lady B—— again."

"Jealousy!—As I wish to be esteemed by you, I will justify my contempt for Lady B——. But, before, let me beg of you and your mother to spend this day in the country.—It is delightful weather.—I have a little box at Hampstead.—There, when I have opened my heart to you, you will approve my conduct, and detest Lady B——. Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey will have the honour of accompanying you.—Be pleased to grant me that favour."

"If you will leave your sadness behind," said my mother, "we will accept of your invitation."

"That I may the sooner get rid of it, let

let me wait upon you. The company of Miss Ramsay is the only charm that can restore me to myself."

"I will, Sir, forgive the gallantry of your compliment, in favour of the pleasure your conversation procured me last night.—But do not address yourself any more to my vanity—it is dead to the language of flattery."

Though I spoke with dignity, my dress belied the accent of it. My attitude, in spite of myself, was relative to that dress—and my consciousness of it, enlivened my deportment with an expression of voluptuousness. The languor printed by sorrow, vanished from Mr. R——'s countenance—his eyes began to wander with delight, and I read in his animated silence, the panegyric of my charms. Some thoughts on the sensations I caused—such thoughts are always dangerous—My mother had unluckily stepped

ped

ped into the next room—I got up with a blush—would speak, and did not know what to say. My dress, which was scarcely decent when I sat down, was no more so when I stood up—The light silk over me concealed hardly the form, and still less the elasticity of my breast—the more lively and rapid, as I attempted, but in vain, to repress it.—The shortness of my petticoat, discovered the beginning of two legs, which would have made a faint sigh, and forgot the beatific vision, the perpetual object of his dreams and meditations.—Mr. R—— was not a faint; he enjoyed my confusion, and increased it with a few flattering exclamations. What a fool a woman is, when she suffers her imagination to domineer over her reason!—The dress of pleasure had forced in my heart the sentiment of it—I looked as if I had taken the spirit of that dress.—Mr. R——, what a fire in his eyes!—Mr. R——

R—— took my hand in his—I did not foresee the consequence of this action, and thoughtlessly made him taste of the pleasures attending it.—One part of my gown, being no longer supported, opened—the veil between my bosom and him dropped—his lips telling me the advantages I had given him, I roused from my reverie.

“I have been, Sir, the dupe of my dress, and of my good opinion of you,” said I with a smile.—I dared to smile!—A smile, upon such an occasion, is oftener the characteristic of innocence, than of libertinism.—“I ought not to have received you in the negligee I was in, or have been more upon my guard against a man of gallantry.”

“Will you say, lovely Ramsay, it was in my power to be more discreet?—When you looked all temptation, could I look indifferent? Nay, this very instant——”

“Well,”

“ Well,” answered I with another smile,
“ I will not blame you for your indiscretion, since you pretend that I have been the cause of it. Now be pleased, Sir, to go down to Mrs. Lindsey—when we are ready, we will have the honour of waiting upon you.”

“ Shall I go with you ?”

“ I will not deny myself the pleasure of your company.”

“ I have forgot Lady B—— ; to you, lovely Ramsay, I am indebted for my cure.”

Why did his compliment please me ? I was a woman armed with experience, and the thirst of knowledge, I thought my reason secure against my feelings—yet, how quickly these prevailed over it !

“ I must no more form any resolution !” exclaimed I ; it is absurd to pretend to wisdom, when we are, every hour, forcibly tempted into the path of folly.”

CHAP. LIV.

WHEN we came down into the parlour, we found Mr. R—— by himself.

“Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey,” said he to us, “are set out in a post-chaise. Lindsey was not very fond of the *tête à tête*; but I insisted upon it, as a just punishment for his last night’s impertinence.”

“Is he sensible of it?”

“He is.”

“So he will drink no more?”

“This is, to-day, his intention; to-morrow he will forget it. Bad habits are seldom corrected, but by the abuse of them. A fever, only, can make Lindsey a sober man. The love of life is above all the moralists in the world; its dictates are a law for all those who cannot be guided by reason.”

“Till we came to the Hampstead road, our conversation was in our looks. The eyes of Mr. R—— told me, he remembered with pleasure, the effects of my indiscretion, and my blushes told him, I had not forgotten them. The favour I had imprudently suffered him to steal—suffered him to enjoy, endeared him to me.—It was a favour no woman would grant but to a lover—would grant, but when her reason is the slave of her senses. I had complimented him with my modesty! Was not the present ominous? Those reflections I secreted from Mr. R——. He was already but too well acquainted with my sensibility, not to make me apprehensive of giving him an encouragement to abuse it. Mr. R—— was about thirty, and had, in his person and merit, the justification of a woman’s deviations. An intimacy with him was the more dangerous, as I thought him conversant in the know-

knowledge I was ambitious of obtaining. Could I help loving the man of feeling, under the character of a philosopher? I did not dare to answer in the negative.—The behaviour of Mr. R—— was another seduction I could but faintly oppose; my vanity did herself the honour of the countenance he wore.—That countenance was as much the expression of happiness, as that which he brought from Lady B—— was the expression of sorrow. Add to that seduction, the enthusiastic ardour with which he had praised me—with which he had made the best of the opportunity I had offered. I thought I still felt the fire of his lips—the bold touch of his rapturous hand. Had he guessed my sensations, should I have been able to resist his attempts of pleasing me? Tender women, put yourself in my place, and answer for me! Mr. R—— did not guess my sensations—they lived in my heart, whilst

whilst modesty and innocence reigned in my looks and deportment.

When we had gone through the first turnpike, I asked Mr. R—— to tell us the reason of his contempt for Lady B——, and the history of his amour with her.

“I will, Madam, satisfy your curiosity. Lady B——’s perfidy is no longer a torment—It is present to my mind, unattended by shame or sorrow.”

He looked at me, to know whether I understood him—Prudence had silenced vanity—He discovered in my features nothing but the curiosity he had promised to satisfy.

“Lady B——, Madam, has been a widow these three years past—she is but three and twenty years old—has had no children—and her fortune is hardly sufficient to support the dignity of her rank. A friend introduced me to her six months ago. Though her beauty, and the graces

of her person, deserved my admiration, I should have withstood their powers, had not her virtues and sensibility captivated my reason. Defenceless against so many charms, I forcibly loved Lady B——. Rich, and of a noble family, I spoke the feelings of my heart.—Lady B—— returned sentiment for sentiment, and consented to my happiness. Thursday next was fixed for the celebration of our marriage. This morning, when I came home, a servant gave me this billet.

“SIR,

“Do not fail to be at Mount’s coffee-house to-morrow morning, between ten and eleven.—I have something of importance to communicate to you. Come without servants, and dress as plain as you can.

Saturday
night.

I am, &c.

SARAH POTTER.”

“This

“This Sarah Potter, Ladies, is the favourite waiting-woman of Lady B——. The cautions she desired me to take, gave me no suspicion of her mistress.—Conscious of her virtue, I had not one thought injurious to her. I dressed as Miss Potter had desired, and went to the coffee-house. The girl came soon after.

“I am come,” whispered she, “to put your reason to the test; I hope it will prove victorious over the intelligence I bring you. The man of feeling must give way to the man of sense—To the last, only, I can tell, what the first would not patiently listen to.”

“That exordium, Ladies, alarmed me.”

“Is Lady B—— dead!” exclaimed I.

“Of no other evil was I fearful.”

“No, Sir,” answered she, “her ladyship never enjoyed better health.”

“Then speak what you please; you cannot make me miserable.”

“You are,” said Miss Potter, “so obstinate in your good opinion of my mistress, that, were I not so much obliged to you, I would leave you in your error: but the man from whom I have received so many proofs of generosity, deserves gratitude and respect from me. I will cheerfully hazard the displeasure of her ladyship, to save you from the greatest misfortune that can befall a man of honour. Lady B——, Sir, is a prude—her virtues are affected—she is in the solitude of her closet a woman of pleasure.”

“The assurance of the girl astonished me; but her tale was so improbable, that I would not credit it.”

“Your picture, Sarah, is over-painted—I conjecture you have had a quarrel with your mistress.”

“Were it so,” replied she, “I should not seek for so mean a revenge against her. I do not wonder at your incredulity,

lity, I expected it; as you are a lover, I forgive your injustice to me. I have spoken the truth, and will confirm it with proofs. Have you the courage to see Lady B—— in the arms of a rival, and prudence enough to conceal your indignation?"

"Are you in earnest, Sarah? are you in earnest?"

"Indeed I am," exclaimed Miss Potter. "Be calm, good Sir—Lady B—— is not worthy the sorrow with which you seem to be oppressed."

"Oh! Sarah! Sarah! you have torn my heart."

"It is needless, Ladies, to tell you what I suffered; my situation was singularly deplorable—for half an hour my head and heart were keenly tortured. At last, reason reassumed her empire; and I desired Miss Potter to give me the proofs she had promised."

“You shall have them,” answered she, “in less than one hour.—My Lady, under the pretence of low-spiritedness, keeps her apartment—all our people, except the house-keeper, are gone to church—It will be easy for me to introduce you into a closet, from which you may distinctly see her ladyship and your rival. I depend upon your discretion—wait for me here—I will come back when you can unperceived steal into the house.”

“How cruel my reflections during her absence! Several of my friends had often given me their opinion of Lady B——’s character.—The decency of her behaviour had not imposed upon them—they all thought she was the reverse of what she appeared to be. Blind and deaf, I would neither see nor hear—The more she was the object of slander, the more I fancied her worthy of my esteem. I made use of my reason, only to ennoble my attachment
to

to her—only to add to my prejudice in her favour. Love and vanity, Ladies, united to torture me—her hatred would have been less excruciating, than the certainty of having been her fool.—She had lavished upon me the dearest expressions of love—had chosen me for her husband—had wished, with me, for the day that should make us mutually happy; and yet I had rivals!—rivals to whom she had nothing to grant! The thought was remedied—but the pain it left behind was still too severe to be tolerated.”

“ Miss Potter came.”

“ Put your handkerchief before your face,” said she to me, “ follow me—we have no time to lose.”

“ The street-door of her ladyship’s house was upon the jar.—I followed my guide with a trembling step, and a heart almost fainting through excess of grief. A back stair-case led us to a library, at

one angle of which, was her ladyship's wardrobe."

"Here," said Miss Potter, "you are safe against any intruder—Through that ash-window you may perceive every object in the dressing-room—It is the theatre of her Ladyship's pleasures. When your curiosity is satisfied, go back the same way you came in—I will take care that no body shall see you. Be discreet—let me not repent the service I do you."

"Certain that Miss Potter had not deceived me, I was tempted to go, and to trust to her word. The fear of thinking Lady B—— innocent, should I not have positive proof of her guilt, stopped me—I did not wait long—Her ladyship came into the dressing-room, accompanied by a young, handsome Oxonian of my acquaintance—Her dress would have done honour to the taste of the most refined woman of pleasure. I will spare your
M modesty,

modesty, Ladies, the description of the spectacle I beheld.—I was convinced that love had cheated me of my reason, and that the object of my attachment deserved my contempt. Though mortally exasperated, I had the prudence to retreat.—Miss Potter was upon the watch.”

“I am satisfied,” said I to her, “and I left the house, resolved never to set my foot in it again. I went home, and attempted to laugh at the adventure—The attempt was vain—I came to you for relief—and have found it.”

His compliment was lost upon me—an unmeaning nod was the only thanks I gave him for it.

“Prudes of that character,” said my mother, “are very scarce—Meanness of soul is seldom united with the love of pleasure.—The female voluptuaries are, in general, generous and disinterested; as their hypocrisy springs solely from the de-

fire of being esteemed, it is rather a virtue than a vice. The appearance of modesty in women is useful to the public.—The prude, who secretes her private violations of it, contributes to the good of society, and is much more estimable than the really virtuous woman, whose manners are the satire of morality. Lady B—— is not to be ranked in the class of the prudes I mention. Had she made you happy as a lover, I would not despise her; but her designs upon you are both odious and criminal; I congratulate you upon your lucky escape.”

The conversation took a new turn, and Mr. R—— endeavoured to make me the object of it. He did not dare to ask who I was; but I easily guessed his desire of knowing it. Thinking my character and manners made me superior to my birth, I did not hesitate to indulge his curiosity. A stronger motive induced me to gratify it.

it. "Acquainted with my situation in life, would he change his behaviour, and from the sentimental man of honour, sink into the familiar, presumptuous libertine?" Circumstanced as I was, the experiment was indispensable.

"You seem, Sir, desirous of knowing who and what we are; I will tell it you very ingenuously. Though I be neither rich, nor of a noble family, I glory in the parents Providence has given me.—Such a mother makes atonement for the advantages fortune has denied me.—With her, adversity is no evil—with another, more noble and opulent, prosperity might be no good."

Then, reflecting, *apropos*, that my dress, which did not agree with poverty, might give him an unfavourable opinion of me, I told him the views of my mother for a settlement in London, and the place, the

desire of improving my education, had obliged me to accept."

Mr. R——'s praises, language, and behaviour pleased my reason and vanity. I said in my heart, "I am afraid I shall love him." And with this thought and fear, I alighted at his villa in Hampstead.

C H A P. LV.

FAR from being pleased with the company of Mr. and Mrs. Lindsey, I wished they had not been with us. Why did I form that wish?—To hear Mr. R—— talk of love and philosophy.—His conversation was a meal my reason and sensibility were inclined to indulge—My senses were not the creators of that wish, it sprang from self-love and curiosity.

Mr. R——'s attention and respect were flattering, but not explicit. "What did he mean by looking and talking like a lover?—by repeatedly saying he admired and esteemed me? He knew I was going to live with a woman of rank; that, once in her house, I should be lost to him. Were his love and esteem sincere, would he not endeavour to dissuade me from accepting a place, which would not only deprive him

him of the pleasure of seeing me, but also put it out of his power to do me justice?—Could he take for his wife the companion of Lady Spelmer?—Was I not in my actual station more worthy of him?” These reflections were to my reason, what the dross of pleasure had been to my sensibility.—They kept it alive, and deprived Mr. R—— of the advantages his merit, my indiscretion, and the circumstances had given him over me. I avoided no opportunity he thought proper to seize, or to create, to tell me what he felt. He no longer discovered in my answers, the warmth of the interest with which he had inspired me. I listened with carelessness, and answered with levity. Mr. R—— had too much discernment to mistake the cause of my conduct; he plainly saw that I was in arms against the man of gallantry; and that, unless he should act the man of honour, he could

not

not entertain the hope of pleasing me. That part Mr. R—— did not chuse to perform. From the voluptuous disorder in which he had seen me, he had formed an idea of my feelings that did not demand the sacrifice of his liberty. His respect did not proceed from his consciousness of my virtue, but from his consciousness of my vanity, which required that homage, and seemed delighted with it. Some unguarded expressions betrayed his thoughts; and I rejoiced in a discovery that armed me so powerfully against him. From that moment my gaiety appeared the genuine effects of indifference—From that moment he became sensible he had not, unknown to me, cherished an error injurious to my delicacy. That knowledge did not make him repent—he continued the character of a sentimental man, and we returned to London; he still flattering himself with the hope of giving
law

law to my sensibilities; and I perfectly convinced they should never side in his favour.

I will confess, that the ill success of Mr. R——, in his amour with Lady B——, had weakened my good opinion of him. In vain did he attribute to love his ignorance of her Ladyship's character. The dupe of a prude appeared to me a downright idiot, in matters of sentiment, and could not be justified in my eye. In six months time he had not been able to perceive either Lady B——'s dislike of him, or her passion for pleasure! Should I love the man who had not pleased Lady B——? The man who, in six months time, had made no impression upon the sensibility of a voluptuous woman? Mr. R—— was not lovely enough to oppose the effects of these reflections. Though a man of genius and extensive knowledge, he was unacquainted with the female heart,

heart, and did not possess either the art or the character requisite to captivate it. Depending upon his merit, more than upon our foibles, he hardly knew the power of a circumstance, and still less how to make use of it. The emotions, with which I had set out for his villa, were exceedingly favourable to him, yet he had suffered me to reason myself into indifference, and to think him guilty of a dishonourable intention against me.

“As it was yet very early when we came to our lodgings, Mr. R—— begged the favour of spending half an hour with us.

“As a friend, Sir,” answered I with politeness and dignity, “you are welcome; but I will suffer no man to mimic with me the character of a lover.”

“This unexpected reply confounded Mr. R——; he muttered a compliment I could not hear, and left us.”

Young

Young women, your dress is often the creator of your thoughts and feelings. When modesty has presided at your toilette, the looks of men have neither the boldness, nor the fire of desire. Kept within the limits of discretion and respect, they do not offer to your imagination the always tempting image of pleasure—and your sensibility remains in a calm, favourable to your virtue. A dress, calculated to inflame the passions of men, produces a contrary effect—Their countenance tells you soon, what you ought not to be told. Why do you blush if you do not understand their language? How could you blush, if that language did not force in your heart a sentiment it is not decent for you to indulge. When you are in a *deshabille*, that half conceals and half discovers your charms, you generally avoid the company of men. Is it virtue or fear that makes you so cautious? It is fear.

You

You are conscious that, in those circumstances, men have over your virtue an advantage, of which all your prudence might not deprive them. Should Nature happen to be silent, vanity would speak, and bring the same rapturous confusion into your heads. The transports of a lover are so flattering—his admiration is so eloquent a praise of our charms—there is such a life in his looks and actions—we are, in our hearts, so inclined to let him praise and admire—Young women, I say it again, sip not in the intoxicating cup—turn your sight from it—in your flight only you can find your safety.

“Why,” said I to my mother, “does my reason abandon me when I have need of her?”

Her answer alarmed me—Poor reason! and I reflected upon my situation. It was evident that Mr. R—— did not do me the favour of thinking me worthy of
being

being his wife.—His respect was only a compliment he had paid me as a politician, and not as a man of honour—His suffering me to go to Lady Spelmer, when, had he loved and esteemed me, it would have been so highly his interest to have prevented it, proclaimed his contempt of my virtue, and the hopes he founded upon his gold. I was too cool in my scrutiny of his sentiments, not to brave the danger of a connection with him—nay, not to be careless of a continuation of it. The promise I had made Mr. S——, should he not marry Miss P——, was of a far greater importance, and not easily to be laughed at. Could I keep the two thousand pounds and break my word? After the voluntary surrender of my virtue, what defence could I make, capable of justifying the breaking of my word? Though fortune had favoured me against him, my soul had united with his, in the sacrifice

sacrifice of my modesty.—He had met no resistance, and enjoyed my transports—My arms had freely opened to welcome him to raptures—My lips had returned upon his the passion he had breathed upon mine—He had seen me wanton, voluptuous, in all the confusion of a woman devoted to pleasure.—Under what pretence could I deny what I had already granted?—How could I say—“I repent the word I gave, and will not keep it?” Should I not chuse to be his mistress, I might be his wife!—I found very little comfort in the liberty of my choice.—“To be a wife!”—I had so much reflected upon the nature of our desires, and the effects of our enjoyments, that my fancy refused to paint matrimony in a favourable light. The love of myself was a greater orator, than the love of my reputation. To my philosophical eye, the good opinion of men was not preferable

able to real happiness—and that happiness I centered in my feelings and independency. What to resolve I knew not—I continued to live between hope and fear—and left to future events the disposal of my conduct.

In the midst of these thoughts did I forget Sir Henry Fentham? No. His image offered itself to my memory, like an agreeable dream, which pleases our imagination—like a felicity we wish we could possess. Was he not the real cause that disgraced Mr. R—— in my eye—that supported my indifference for Mr. S——. Alas, I will not be so presumptuous as to say No.

C H A P. LVI.

HAVING formed a wardrobe suitable to my new station of life, I sent to Lady Spelmer the letter of Mrs. P——, and to let her know I waited for her commands. “It is well—” was the answer I received. I was plaguing my mother and myself about the meaning of that “It is well—” and was almost tempted to interpret it to the disadvantage of Mr. R——, when a thundering rap at the street-door called for my attention. Fearful lest it should be that gentleman, whose visit I was not then inclined to receive, I left the dining-room; and almost at the same time, a footman came into it, and introduced Lady B——. Lady B——! the very woman who, unknown to herself, had, before her lover, acted the part of a consummate libertine.

“What

“What could be the cause of her visit? Was it jealousy? How could she know I was acquainted with Mr. R——?”

I had not time to think any longer; her Ladyship asking for Miss Fanny Ramsay, I stepped into the dining-room. At the first sight of me, Lady B—— paid me a compliment we are not accustomed to receive from one of our sex. Her eyes spoke a flattering surprise, and sparkled with pleasure. What shall I say of her charms, graces, and deportment? I had thought Amelia a superior beauty, a beauty without a rival—had I known Lady B——, I should not have thought Amelia a beauty—How noble, delicate, and captivating every feature! How exquisitely shaped! How perfectly turned and proportioned every limb!—Her modesty was not that stupid blush, that ill-natured frown, that tells a man to be discreet.—Her modesty was a friend to pleasure.

pleasure.—There was in their united expression a singular beauty, a beauty which called for a lover's kiss, at the same time that it forbade his approach to her lips.

“Mrs. P——, Miss, is a bad painter,” said Lady B—— with a smile, “her pencil has not done you justice. I was with Lady Spelmer when she received your letter—she desired me to take a glance at you.—This true motive of my visit you would not have known, had not the extreme comeliness of your person prejudiced me in your favour.”

“Lady B—— intimate with Lady Spelmer!” This reflection gave me a bad opinion of her Ladyship's morals: Is not friendship commonly founded upon a similarity of character? Would Lady Spelmer, were she really virtuous, associate with a libertine? I had been so often mistaken in my judgments—been so often led into errors by reasoning agree-

ably to the prejudices of education, that I thought it prudent to hesitate, till time had unfolded to me the real cause of the connection between them. Feeling the necessity of pleasing Lady B——, I acted, and spoke so much to her satisfaction, that she complimented me with a wish she were Lady Spelmer, that she might perpetually enjoy the pleasure of my conversation.

“You have made me, Miss Ramsay, forget ten visits I intended to pay—few women could have obtained from me the sacrifice of them.—I will not part with you yet.—Come and dine with me; after dinner I’ll present you to Lady Spelmer, with whom, if it be agreeable to Mrs. Ramsay, you shall fix your quarters this very evening.”

My mother thanked Lady B—— for the esteem with which she honoured me, and said, “that having no other business

in

in London than that of seeing me under the protection of Lady Spelmer, she would rather hasten than put off the hour of my being admitted into her Ladyship's family."

"Whilst you are at Lady B——'s, Fanny, I will prepare for my journey."

"It will be time to think of it to-morrow," said Lady B——; "this day you must give to me—I meet too seldom with sensible women not to insist upon the favour of your company."

"I am afraid," said my mother smiling, "you will repent the invitation you give us.—At your age, and with so many charms, your hours belong to love and pleasure; we ought not to rob you of them."

"Your fear, Madam," said Lady B——, tapping me gently upon the shoulder, "is a compliment you should pay to Miss Ramsay, and not to me. Am

I not too indiscreet to ask for her company, when she had, perhaps, intended to favour a lover with it?"

"Had I such an intention, my Lady, I might not have preferred you to my lover."

"Your sincerity charms me—Had you flattered me with a preference, I would not have esteemed you—I am glad you have not been a dupe to your education—Philosophy, in this life, is as necessary a good as health, gold, or beauty; without it, their advantages are hardly of any benefit to us. Did we see with the eyes of those who have interest to entertain us with errors, our existence would be an intolerable burthen. The most abject slavery would not be such a torment as the perpetual sacrifice of our reason and sensibilities."

"In this enlightened age, my Lady, prejudices have lost their influence over
the

the conduct of mankind. Though opinion seems to rule still, it is, in reality, the slave of our passions."

"You are mistaken indeed, Miss Ramsay; ignorance is always timorous; it is with a trembling step, that most men or women walk in the path of ambition or pleasure. Like those free-thinkers who affect to scoff at religion because it is a check upon their inclinations, they attempt, but in vain, to silence their conscience, which opposes the gratification of their desires. How could reason gain the ascendancy over their prejudices, when it is strengthened neither by reflection nor study?—The pursuits of pleasure, and the gay diversions of the age, engrossing all their time, engaging all their attention, must necessarily divert their minds from nobler objects, and keep them from the knowledge of themselves."

"Men or women surrounded by the

cares of life may resemble the picture you have drawn; but people of fashion have both leisure and opportunity to exert their reason and improve their time."

"From hence you must not conclude they make the best of them. The useful, Miss Ramsay, is generally sacrificed to the agreeable or convenient; whoever has in his purse the means of trifling his time away, will seldom seek for them in meditation, books, or the society of the learned and sensible."

"Such a life is not the road to happiness—how came you, my Lady, to be sensible of this truth?"

"By accident, dear Miss Ramsay; my husband was an old man, who married me for himself and not for me—he wanted a lovely companion to sweeten the bitterness of old age. Obligated to comply with his taste and manner of living, I received at my table and in my circle, none but
men

men of talents and merit. Painters, musicians, and philosophers, were almost the sole beings with whom, for four years, I was suffered to converse. In their conversation, and the practice of the arts and sciences they taught me, I found a pleasure that liberally compensated for the solitary life I led. The philosophers boldly eradicated from my mind the errors which were planted in my infancy, and fed it with truth and knowledge. From them I acquired the habit of reflection, and the inestimable advantage of finding, in the solitude of my closet, more real satisfaction, than in the company of our modern *beaux* and *belles* of fashion. At the death of Lord B——, I entered the world armed against all the opinions destructive to my happiness.—I make use of my reason, Miss Ramsay—it is a guide that has not yet deceived me.”

“ In cool blood we easily follow the

admonitions she gives; but, my lady, when passion commands, is she of any service to you?"

"Yes, dear Ramsay; she tells me to indulge it, if productive of good—to conceal it, if noxious to my reputation."

"Should, my lady, your enjoyments endanger the happiness of a family?"

"Then, Miss, reason points to me the fear of infamy—and that fear is always a powerful check on a woman who would be respected. As we can form no just idea of what we neither can know, nor see, nor hardly believe existing, the fear of infamy has over us an authority which religion has not. The punishments inflicted by this, are of so spiritual a nature, and so far off in the perspective before us, that the present perceptions would constantly triumph over them, did not opinion and the law threaten us with the contempt of the world, and with
pains

pains adapted to our sensibility. The loss of honour, the pillory, the gallows, are the true devils that frighten mankind, correct their vicious dispositions, and stop them in the execution of crimes. They speak more forcibly to our mind, dear Ramsay, than the description of the infernal abodes.—Were it not for them, this world would be inhabited by monsters, and not by men.”

“Would not an enlightened education, my Lady, produce the same effects as opinion and law?”

“No, dear Ramsay, we receive that education, when the passions have not yet roused in our breast the love of liberty and pleasure. At that time it is easy to modify us at the pleasure of the legislators; but, as their work is entirely founded upon the silence of love, pride, and ambition, it is easily destroyed when

they take possession of our hearts. The world, dear Miss Ramsay, is an academy, in which we receive a second education, almost in every thing a contrast to the first. Nature and the passions give us a new existence, new thoughts, new sensations, new wants—Our reason and sensibility unite then together against whatever opposes our happiness.—We hate restraint, contradiction, and shake off the yoke of the duties imposed upon us. Vivified by desires, our souls scorn to be dictated to.—No passion would be left unsatisfied, were not its gratifications to be followed by the contempt of our friends, and the pity of our enemies.”

At those words Lady B—— arose.

“It is late; we will resume this subject after dinner.”

“Your confidence in me, my Lady, is a favour I will study to deserve.”

“You

"You have already deserved it, since I have laid my heart open before you. I knew your character before I ventured to discover my thoughts.—You are a treasure, of which I know the value.—Lady Spelmer is worthy of possessing it."

C H A P. LVII.

FROM Lady B——'s conversation, I concluded that though her mind was not bound by the scruples that tie the vulgar of mankind, she was incapable of committing a mean or unjust action. With the tenderest sensibility is seldom allied a contemptible character : Such an astonishing contrast is not adapted to the delicate disposition of a female voluptuary. —Mr. R—— had seen her in the arms of a man, and yet she had consented to marry him ! It was, undoubtedly, a villainous procedure ; a procedure which bespoke a wicked and ungenerous soul— But was she really guilty of it ?—or had she no plea to offer in her justification ? Curiosity got the better of my discretion ; I resolved to put to the test the friendship with which Lady B—— honoured me.

When we came to her Ladyship's house, she told a footman she was at home only for Lady Spelmer. I thought the opportunity favourable.

"You have, my Lady, given an order which may make many men miserable: Is there not one among them worthy of causing you to repent it?"

Lady B—— smiled.

"Had I asked you the same question, my dear Fanny, how would you have answered it?"

"With sincerity, upon my honour! To you, my Lady, I would trust every secret of my heart."

"To you, my dear girl, I will pay the same compliment. Though I have been but a few hours with you, I am certain I can safely confide in your discretion.—Your principles are similar to my own—are they not?"

"Pre-

“Prejudices opposed by reason—virtues at variance with Nature, shall never make me unhappy.”

“We agree too perfectly well not to trust one another.—There is a man, whom I neither dislike nor love, who, in spite of myself, will be my husband.”

“In spite of yourself, my Lady?”

“Yes, dear Fanny; that man is so enamoured of matrimony, that he will not perceive my aversion to it. Ten times have my looks told him to change the title of a husband into that of a lover.—respect, or rather stupidity, has made him insensible to their expression—Marriage is his hobby-horse—He has offered his hand, and I have been obliged to accept it.”

“You are rich enough to act at your pleasure; why did not you frankly tell him you would not be his wife?”

“My

"My parents, relations, and friends, are constantly plaguing me in his favour. I have no other choice than to be his wife, or to have them all for my enemies. A widow, and at my age, can so happily divide her life between love and philosophy, that were it not for the fear of censure and slander, I would despise all their remonstrances, and follow my own inclinations. Though Mr. R—— be a man of honour, and unites excellent qualities to an immense fortune, I know too well the human heart, to hope for happiness in a state of slavery. Easy enjoyments, dear Fanny, leave the heart without a desire of them—In that desire only, consist their delightful sensations—A felicity under our hand is bereft of the seductions that make it agreeable—Love would soon vanish from the heart of my husband, and vexation take possession of my own."

"Are

"Are there no means to break off a match so odious to you?"

"I have foolishly given my word, and the wedding-day is fixed. I have no hopes but in his contempt of me.—It is cruel to be despised by a man of feeling and honour!—Yet I lose my liberty if he continues to esteem me."

"Was he never jealous?"

"I have given him twenty causes to forsake me—twenty opportunities to despise me—they all have been lost upon him. I have encouraged the flandering inclinations of some of his friends, that they might rid me of him—the hour after, he came at my feet to relate what he had heard, and to swear he believed nothing of the impertinent tale. There are men," added she with a smile, "fated for cuckoldom—he is one of them; I cannot help it."

"This

"This man has been a great fool.—
Would you have made him happy?"

"Ten to one I should, upon the condition of never being his wife."

"O! the fool! the fool!" exclaimed I, bursting into laughter; "he might have pleased you!—What greater felicity could he have enjoyed upon earth? My Lady, your candour deserves a proper return from me—I have seen Mr. R——; believe me, he will not be your husband—From you I wanted to know the cause of your marriage; you have convinced me it is the work of necessity, and not of your will—your heart has not been guilty of a mean deceit—from the moment I had the honour of conversing with your Ladyship, I thought you were incapable of it. My mother was present when Mr. R—— told us the history of his connection with you, and of the accident that makes you free. Our knowledge

ledge of that account must not alarm you, my Lady—love is not a disgraceful foible—your secret is buried in our hearts—from thence it never shall part.”

Then I told her how we became acquainted with her lover; the spectacle he had seen in her dressing-room, and the resolution he had formed in consequence of it. As the treason of Miss Potter her waiting-woman, though injurious to her mistress, might be justified by the generosity of her motive, I concealed the part she had had in the transaction.

“All that he has told you,” said Lady B—— with a blush softened by a smile, “is true, except the fondness he says I have shewn him, and the alacrity with which I accepted his hand. We were perpetually chanting, he the praise, and I the satire, of matrimony; when, to support his opinion, he named ten happy married people, I named one hundred miserable.

miserable. We mutually exerted all the powers of wit and reason, he to persuade me to be his wife, I to persuade him not to be my husband. Mr. R—— plainly saw that my consent was forced—that I yielded only to the pressing intreaties of my friends.—He perceived my disgust, and often complained of it—yet, urged by an irresistible destiny, he neither would hear nor see; and continued obstinately in the pursuit of his favourite folly.—The scene in the dressing-room does not humble me.—I love the young man he saw in my arms. Had not Mr. R—— chosen to be blind, he would not have been a stranger to my attachment to the young man.—In spite of all my attention to conceal it, my looks, my smiles, my conversation, betrayed it incessantly. Nature has given me a tender heart—a heart susceptible of pleasure.—I am a widow! Whom can my enjoyments injure or offend?

offend? Unknown to society, are they not innocent, since they are productive of no evil? The laws of Nature, dear Fanny, are before those of Religion.—God himself has given me my sensibility—he formed me such as I was to be—by favouring me with the powers of enjoying, he has told me to enjoy—had he intended that we should make the sacrifice of our feelings, he would not have given us the desire of gratifying them.—I believe in a God who delights in the happiness of his creatures.—Moralists have represented him under the variegated colours of a just and unjust, a capricious and rational, a good and a cruel Being—Their reason is not mine.—The God I adore is the Father of all mankind—though my understanding be too weak to know his nature, I revere and thank him for the life he has given me, and the blessings with which he has accompanied it.”

Lady

Lady B—— spoke her apology with a grace, an action, a dignity, that would have bribed all the judges in the world; she had no need of the help of reason to please and persuade. There was in her accent a vivacity and sprightliness, an irresistible charm, that compulsively demanded our approbation of her conduct. Who would not have condemned Mr. R—— and acquitted her, after the defence she had made?—*Hear the other party*—it is excellent advice; did we follow it, how many men and women charged with guilt or meannesses would appear innocent?

C H A P. LVIII.

THE thought of a husband no longer tormenting Lady B——, she put on the countenance of gaiety and pleasure.

“With you, Ladies, I will wear no mask; you shall see me such as I am.—It is, perhaps, the first time that three women have met without an interest to deceive one another. Let us talk freely.—I shall have the dinner in this room—No servant but my waiting-woman shall attend—Let us think and talk freely—No fool shall hear, and falsely report, or interpret, what we say.”

Lady B—— had read and reflected much—her conversation was an inexhaustible spring of entertaining and useful observations on the manner and customs prevailing in the different governments upon earth. She gave us a sketch
of

of the absurdities which make almost every religion the satire of human reason — she was peculiarly severe upon those Divines, who offer to our veneration a God, the slave of man, who has it in his power to disturb his felicity whenever he chuses to wander from the path of virtue — a path that owes its existence only to the establishment of the society.

“Is it not extremely ridiculous,” said her Ladyship, “to suppose that weak mortals can put the Deity into a passion, then appease him, and then inflame again his breast with anger and the thirst of revenge?”

* * * * *

[Not to frighten weak minds, some thoughts are here omitted by the Translator.]

* * * * *

Lady B—— was expatiating upon the human errors, when her waiting-woman came in with a letter.

“I bring

I bring you good news, my Lady—this letter will make you happy.”

“From Mr. R——,” exclaimed her Ladyship; “I will read it to you, ladies.”

“My Lady,

“The part you acted last Sunday in your dressing-room, has restored to me my liberty. No longer am I your lover, nor ever shall be your husband.

“F. R——.”

The impudence of the girl surprised me; but I was still more so, when she boasted openly that she was the cause of the discovery he had made.

“Your extreme aversion to marriage, my Lady, induced me to betray you, that you might not be miserable—Had I been more delicate in my means of serving you, Thursday next would have seen you a wife.—I sent for Mr. R——, and introduced him into your Ladyship’s wardrobe—if I have done wrong, my Lady,
it

it is with the intention of doing you good."

"To save me from one misfortune, Sarah, you have brought another upon me—the loss of my reputation."

"Don't fear, my Lady—Mr. R—— loves himself too much not to be tender of your secret."

"Very tender he is of it indeed! two hours after he knew it, he disclosed it to these two Ladies."

"O! the wretch! he had promised me to be as silent as the grave.—"

"No matter, Sarah!—I'll find means to balk him of his poor revenge. Should I not succeed, it is still better to be the object of a fortnight's tea-table conversation, than to be unhappy all my life. How has he rewarded the service you have done him?"

"With three hundred pound bank-notes; here they are, my Lady, and I

shall send them immediately to any hospital you will be pleased to mention."

The disinterestedness of Miss Potter made me ashamed of the suspicions I entertained of her duplicity. Who would not have thought she had sacrificed the honour of her mistress to her gratitude for Mr. R——? This new instance convinced me, that in order not to repent of our judgments of men and women, we ought not to believe what is probable, as it may be as far from truth as the impossible itself.—Her Ladyship told Miss Potter to dispose of her money as she pleased; and the girl went away overjoyed at not having incurred the displeasure of her mistress.

"The infatuation of Mr. R——," said Lady B——, "would have baffled any remedy less violent than that administered by my waiting-woman—no other could have freed me from his importunities."

"Did

"Did he ever take you for a prude, my Lady?"

"No, he had too much sense to mistake my character. Mr. R—— always saw in me a woman graced with modesty; and, as he chose to be kept in awe by that modesty, he certainly thought it natural, and not fictitious."

"One of his friends told him you were a prude."

"Was it not Mr. W——?"

"Yes, my Lady."

"That man, dear Fanny, would be my lover, and I would not be his mistress. My dislike of him offended his vanity—Out of revenge he called me a prude; this is the title bestowed by a disappointed lover upon the woman who does not make him happy.—I am a prude, because he did not please me.—As the world goes, dear Fanny, I am surprised at his moderation.—Thousands in his place,

would not have failed to pay to their reputation the compliment of the surrender of my virtue."

"I thought our men of gallantry were just and generous to the fair."

"They are generally so to those who deserve their contempt; but never, or very seldom to those who deserve their esteem."

"Do you think that woman contemptible, who receives in her arms the man she loves?"

"No, dear Fanny; but as all lovers are not philosophers, they cannot separate the idea of guilt from the favours granted them by their mistresses. In that case, they necessarily despise what they love; and yet, out of gratitude, they will be discreet. The women they cannot seduce, become the natural objects of their indignation and hatred—they are to them what a man who will not lend his money is to

the

the spendthrift—expect no justice from those whose vanity, passions, or wants, you refuse to gratify.”

“If your picture be faithful, our countrymen must have greatly degenerated.”

“The character of a nation, dear Fanny, changes with their manners. The men, two hundred years ago, resemble those who live at present no more than *Hercules* resembles *Narcissus*. Riches and luxury have enervated their souls, and chased from their hearts the heroic sentiments of honour and glory. Cunning, deceit, and flattery, have succeeded to candour, generosity, and virtue. The noble passion of love is dwindled into the spirit of libertinism.”

* * * * *

[The Translator does not think proper to finish this picture of our manners. Mr. Helvetius made it certainly in a fit of the spleen. It is partial and unmerited.]

* * * * *

“What good can a man derive from blackening the character of a virtuous woman?”

“A great one, dear Fanny; first, he pleases all the women who were humbled by the reputation of her virtue.—Secondly, the honour of his pretended conquest may inspire a curiosity, which, in many a foolish female heart, holds the place of esteem and tenderness.—Men, corrupted as they are, will seldom consult honesty, when their infamy is of any benefit to them.”

“Agreeably to these principles, the number of those women who pass for virtuous must be prodigiously abridged.”

“It is so inconsiderable, dear Fanny, that it would almost be impossible to select fifty women, whose virtue has not been challenged. The most virtuous is the least suspected.—Like a man of true honour, she lives in the midst of her enemies,

enemies, and cannot escape their censure."

"Is not an innocent woman, suspected of a false step, encouraged to commit it?"

"It is the opinion entertained by men, and the motive of their perpetual calumnies. However, the shame of that suspicion will never favour a lover, unless he be loved, or the reason of his mistress be lost in her sensibility. No woman, in cold blood, dear Fanny, will sacrifice to pleasure. It is her heart, and not the unjust contempt of men, that will deprive her of her virtue. Lady Spelmer is one of those women who has given life to calumny, though, in fact, she be the most discreet and faithful wife in London. Her virtue is not the effect of her respect for morality—that virtue is almost a stranger in the world—but of a natural indifference, which makes her find a greater
O 4 delight

delight in the practice of her duty, than in a deviation from it. She glories in her constancy to her husband, no more than a protector of genius glories in the favours he confers upon men of merit. Both are attracted by the desire of pleasing themselves.—Love would create in the breast of Lady Spelmer, what envy would produce in that of the protector of genius, a total change in their manners. So long as no man shall warm her senses or captivate her heart, she will live the life of a coquette, and make a fool of every man who shall admire her. The mind of Lady Spelmer, dear Fanny, is as free from prejudices, as her heart is free from passion—her genius leads her as naturally to the study of *Locke* and *Newton*, as her want of sensibility to the contempt of libertinism. She ranges in the vortex of dissipation and pleasure with the head of a philosopher, and carries no
where

where the flandering spirit of a prude, or the ill-natured severity of our modern virtuous women. As to her person, dear Fanny, she is rather handsome than pretty—rather formed to inspire a strong passion, than a temporary fervour—Her eyes speak the language of sentiment, and not that of desire—Men do not see the wanton Cupids play on her features, animate her smiles, or create her attitudes. Yet her deportment is lovely, inviting, and expressive of a *je ne sçais quoi*, uncommonly attractive and pleasing.—No woman is more agreeable, rational, and easy to live with.”

“How does she behave to her husband, my Lady?”

“As an honest friend, and complaisant wife.”

“Is he not terrified by her looks of coquetry?”

“Not in the least. Conscious of her

good sense, and that, though she indulges in every fashionable diversion, his happiness is the principal object of her care, he suffers her to enjoy the innocent pleasures natural to her age and quality."

"Her Lord, very likely, finds abroad, and in the same round of pleasures, a comfort for the want of her company at home."

"Her Lord, dear Fanny, employs his time, and does not abuse it. The scheme of his life is an honour to his understanding.—Most part of the day he devotes to the improvement of his mind, and the good of his country—and his leisure hours are taken up with reading, riding, or the conversation of some enlightened friends. As he never was a rake, he has not been taught to despise women—and, as he has a thorough knowledge of the human heart, and tenderly loves his wife, it is, by seemingly approving

ing her conduct and complying with her fancies, that he damps her spirit of levity, and love of dissipation, and makes her prefer the pleasure of his company to an assembly or a masquerade. Would men take off the restraint they lay upon the pleasures of their wives, they would make them as fond of a domestic life, as they are generally weary of it. Contradiction is a physic that will never operate; lenitives only, ought to be administered to a sensible woman.—As to the fool, there is no hope of her—Unhappy the man, husband or lover, who casts a serious thought upon her!”

At that minute Lady Spelmer entered the room.

“Welcome, dear Charlotte,” said Lady B——; “I have a present worthy of you.”

“The less I can forgive you, Emily, for having so long deprived me of it.”

"You shall always, my lady, find in me endeavours to deserve your esteem."

"In me, Miss Ramsay, you shall always find a friend."

Lady B—— presented my mother to Lady Spelmer.—How easily do women of sense unite with one another!—how easily an intimacy is formed between them! Lady Spelmer and Lady B—— insensible of their rank, acted and spoke as freely as if we had been their equals—as if years of friendship had justified our confidence in each other.

"Had you not made a party for Drury-Lane, Charlotte?" said Lady B——.

"I had; but my Lord not chusing to accompany me, I would not go."

"Lord! you did not ask him to go with you—did you?"

"I did, Emily. I thought I should be more agreeably entertained with him than without him."

"And

"And he refused you?"

"He said he was engaged at the Countess of N——'s rout.—On this, I proposed to break our mutual engagement and to stay at home. He was so happy with the proposal, Emily, that I was delighted to have made it."

"So you will not sup with me?"

"Yes, with you, Emily, but at my house.—Come, my Lord gave me leave for two hours, and they are almost expired.—He must see the acquisition I have made. Mrs. Ramsay, you will sup with us?"

"My mother begged to be excused, as she had some business, and intended to set out the next day. "To-morrow morning," added she, "I shall have the honour to take leave of your Ladyship."

"Since it is so," said Lady B——, "Emily, drive away with your Fanny; I'll set Mrs. Ramsay down at her lodgings."

I embraced my mother, and followed Lady Spelmer.

C H A P. LIX.

“**M**ISS Ramfay,” said Lady Spelmer to her Lord, “is my excuse for having staid so long.”

“No apology, my Lady, I thank you for having come so soon.”

“If you indulge my faults, my Lord, you never shall mend them.”

“I know none in you, dear Charlotte; I am the happiest of husbands.”

“It is not generous to attempt to make me a sober woman—to make me hate what I like the most.—They already say, in every circle, I have not half the sprightliness I had two months ago; and wonder at my ordering my chair at eleven o’clock, when I used to sit up till three in the morning. Good God! what would they think, should they know I prefer a family-supper to Lady H——’s revels? Indeed, my Lord, if you go on
at

at that rate, you will make me soon the jest of the polite world."

"I! how so, dear Charlotte?"

"Why, my Lord—do not betray me, Miss Ramsay—by making no company agreeable to me—but yours."

Happy Lord Spelmer! joy sparkled in his eyes.

"Dear, dear Charlotte!"

And he clasped her affectionately in his arms.

"What love can repay such a pleasing declaration?"

"I am glad that no body but Fanny sees us," said Lady Spelmer with a smile.

"Fie, my Lord, are you not ashamed? What a ridiculous caricature they would draw, had they seen you caressing your wife, and me not displeased with it!"

"Be constant in the desire of pleasing me."

"How interested you are, my Lord!

you

you wish to be happy at the expence of my reputation. A woman of my rank and spirit to love her husband! Why do not you beg of me to leave London, and to live with you a solitary life in the country?"

"I never shall propose any thing that is not agreeable to you."

"Then, I am afraid, you may propose any thing that is agreeable to yourself."

How captivating this scene! how much to be wished it were not so rare as it is! I saw a tear stealing down from Lady Spelmer's eye, when the transports of her husband told her how much she was loved—how much she had reason to prefer him to all the world."

"Fanny Ramfay," said I to myself, "thou art a fool. How erroneous the judgments thou formest!—'Lady Spelmer is a friend to Lady B——.' What consequences did'st thou draw from their intimacy?"

timacy?" It vexed me to remember it.

Experience only can enlighten our reason, and eradicate from our minds the stupid conceits with which stupid people have fed it. It was only after a succession of different characters displayed before me, that I substituted the creed of truth to the creed of error—and that I gave myself, at last, an understanding proof against all the seductions of vanity and folly. Would youth reflect, and believe those who are conversant in the knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, we soon should have a generation of sensible, just, and virtuous men and women. Ignorance creates credulity, and credulity is the bane of all the qualities necessary to make us happy—and to do honour to the dignity of our nature.

Lord Spelmer approving of his Lady's choice, I was installed in the post of her friend

friend and companion; and an exceeding neat and pretty apartment was allotted to me. Thither I retired, after having spent such an agreeable and rational evening, as made me heartily rejoice, to live in a house where it was an honour to think, and a disgrace to waste time upon trifles and words.

I was just dressed next morning when her Ladyship came to me.

“Miss Ramsay, how do you like your apartment?”

“I have only yet thought, my Lady, about the means of pleasing you, and deserving your goodness.”

“That will not be a hard task, dear Fanny.”

“Miss Ramsay” had made me grave; the “dear Fanny” revived me. I respectfully kissed her hand.

“I have ordered Miss Miller, one of my waiting-women, to attend upon you—only when

when you want her; for I will have you be as free in your actions as in your thoughts. A servant shall be always in waiting for your commands—from nobody but you shall he receive any. I have, however, a scruple about me, Fanny——”

And she smiled.

“The footman I intend to give you, is rather handsome.—An agreeable object constantly before you.—Will not a young and pretty fellow disconcert your plan of a sober philosophical life?”

“I hope not, my Lady.—When fear makes us cautious, a danger is of no importance.”

“So you will run the chance of a temptation?”

“With all my heart, my Lady.”

She rung the bell, and in came a tall, fair, charmingly-featured and elegantly limbed young man.

“Richard,” said Lady Spelmer, “here
is

is your mistress—be obedient, discreet, and faithful to her—please her, and you shall deserve my favours.”

Richard blushed through stupidity, and, whirling his hat, said he would please me.

“Do you hear, Fanny; he says he will please you.”

“I make no doubt, my Lady, but honest Dick will be as good as his word.”

Her Ladyship ordered him out, and then burst into laughter.

“That man, my Lady, has not the look that creates a temptation; he is, I am sure, no food for the feelings of a delicate woman.”

“With the most interesting figure, Fanny, he has the most uninteresting gait and countenance I ever beheld. He seems to be one of those creatures Nature forms in a hurry, and leaves unfinished.—His innocent looks do not conceal a mischievous heart. I thought him a curiosity
worthy

worthy of being offered to you. His father is a tenant of my Lord's, who took that young fellow into his service, to improve his education, and polish his manners; but, till now, he has not answered the expectations of his Lordship. One would think he has not in his breast any seed of the passions which Nature, vanity, and ambition forcibly inspire into the men of his age. As in your service, Fanny, he will have more leisure to read and reflect, he may gradually become sensible of his worth, and of the necessity of enlightening his mind, and gracing his deportment.—He is yet but sixteen.—Passion may at once spring forth in his heart, and render him worthy of my husband's protection. I have seen many dunces in the prime of life, who, on a sudden, have turned men of merit. But no more of that pretty animal; let us go to breakfast —My Lord waits for us."

CHAP. LX.

THE picture her Ladyship had drawn of Richard, and his lovely figure, were present to my mind.—He had said, “he would please me.” Those unmeaning words in his lips appeared to me expressive, when I reflected on the charms of his person, and the innocence of his manners. He was yet a stranger to love—to no woman had he yet talked the language of Nature—Vanity, curiosity. My mother, luckily, came to divert me from these troublesome sentiments. She gave me the following letter:

“Dear Miss,

“The confusion I was thrown in, by Lady B——’s behaviour, made me act like a fool. I loved you, and yet did not attempt to prevent your living with Lady Spelmer! If you esteem me, be pleased to

let me know when I shall call upon you at Mrs. Lindsey's. I am, &c.

"F. R——."

"Never," exclaimed I! "This is the answer, dear mother, I beg you will return him, or leave to Mrs. Lindsey. The man, who will not read in the mind and heart of a young woman, would be but a plague to my sensibility. Like a magician, he can raise a sumptuous banquet before me, and then trifles with my appetite, by forbidding me to taste of it. This has been his behaviour with Lady B——. This has been the cause of his mistake concerning her opinion of him, and of the right he presumes to have of defaming her. I have done with him."

My mother promised she would return from Leicester in a fortnight.—We parted.—Let me throw a veil over our *adieux*. The most beloved lover could not have
made

made me a prey to more true anxiety and sorrow.

Lady Spelmer took me into her library. "Here, Fanny, you may, whenever you please, comfort yourself with the learning and wisdom of the dead—for the ignorance and stupidity of the living. One hour, every morning, we shall read together—Sometimes my Lord will be of our party, and explain what our inexperience will not permit us to understand. Another hour we will devote to needlework; and, when the weather permits, we will either take a turn in the Park, or an airing in the country. In the afternoon, when I have company, I shall beg of you to do the honours of the tea-table. That unnecessary, fatiguing business over, you shall dispose of the evening at your pleasure. Receive your friends; treat them; they shall be welcome. All my people are ordered to obey and respect you.

you.—I would advise you, dear Fanny, to learn French; the excellent books in that language, will amply compensate for the trouble of studying it. History, geography, and moral philosophy, ought to fill up your leisure hours: with the help of these sciences, dear Fanny, your heart will less feel the want of pleasure—be less subservient to the dictates of Nature. Idleness is a fatal enemy to virtue. How can we triumph over our passions, if our reason offers no diversion against them? When a soldier is not kept under a strict discipline, he neglects his duty, is surprised by the enemy, or voluntarily deserts his colours. A young woman is that soldier—A perpetual exertion of the faculties of her mind, only, can support her against the art of flatterers, and the seductions of her fancy.”

“ Though a philosopher, my Lady, you are extremely severe in your prin-
 VOL. II. P ciples.

ciples. What! would you have no indulgence for the errors of sensibility? Would you shew no mercy to two lovers, who, to make themselves happy, would not wait the permission of a priest?"

"Two sincere lovers, Fanny, I would forgive—Nature and love ennoble and justify their wanderings. To all strong and forcible passions I would likewise grant a pardon. But how often does not caprice, pride, envy, curiosity, dispose of women's virtue? Is not that as much a prostitution of their reason, as a prostitution of their persons?"

"But, my Lady, should such women look upon these outrages to virtue, as a duty they ought to pay to Nature?"

"Such women are very rare, Fanny; I doubt whether their existence be not a chimera. Many female free-thinkers, and possessed of an extraordinary sensibility, may not scruple to sacrifice to pleasure.—

But

But none, certainly, would, upon deliberate reflection, consider that sacrifice as a debt they are obliged to acquit."

"Why should not Nature command as forcibly as honour or religion, whose authority, under some climates, is more arbitrary than rational? Nature is every where the same; but honour and religion vary like the manners, customs, and languages."

"The execution of her laws is strongly recommended by Nature—But she is oftener the excuse, than the cause of our obedience to her. All the interested women, Fanny, are the victims of avarice—Nature has no share in their libertinism. Add to them the poor and the vain, who, to free themselves from misery, or support their extravagancies, barter, every day, their honour for gold, you will find very few women, who are led by sensibility into the path of pleasure."

"At that rate, my Lady, men are very unjust to Nature; since they charge her with our deviations from virtue."

"It is much more convenient for them, Fanny, to adopt a general cause of our foibles, than to seek for the private motives that produce them. The error, that justifies their frailties, will be always more agreeable, than the truth that condemns them. Nature tells you to drink, but not to get drunk—To enjoy your sensibility, but not to abuse it.—Her moderation is not calculated for social beings, Fanny—She has hardly any influence over them—They are entirely swayed by laws, opinions, passions, and circumstances, absolutely independent of her."

"The moralists pretend we have received from Nature, a wicked and vicious soul, which social life only can reform."

"Their sentiments, Fanny, are of no more importance than the decisions of a coffee-

coffee-house politician. Moralists are commonly children in the art of reasoning ; or impostors, whose interest it is to make you believe the grossest absurdities. As their existence is founded upon our errors, forgive them when they exert all their powers to preserve it. Should what they say be true, Fanny, the vices of society, added to those of that wicked soul, would produce the most detestable and criminal set of men that could possibly exist. We are not born wicked, nor even inclined to be so. There are men so averse to profit from their advantages over the fools that surround them, that they willingly chuse to lose them, rather than to be guilty of a breach of honesty. It is from society, Fanny, that all those wants proceed which, though fictitious, and unnecessary to our happiness, are the authors of all the crimes, and violations of honour and justice, we foolishly attri-

bute to the corruption of our nature. Can you think it is Nature that induces a Sultan to send a bow-string to a Bashaw, who, unluckily, has the reputation of possessing an immense treasure?—That induces a man to betray his friend, or to calumniate his benefactor?—That induces husbands and wives to wish for the death of each other?—That induces courtiers to make fools of their princes, or princes, fools of their subjects? Is it Nature that dictates a sentence to a judge devoted to the interest of a great man, or to the caprices of a favourite kept mistress?—Is it Nature, dear Fanny, that solicits, and determines at last, a mother to murder her child, that she may preserve her honour?—Nature shudders with horror at the thought of such a behaviour.”

The Dutchess of B—— sending her name up, Lady Spelmer went to receive her; and I retreated to my apartment.

C H A P. LXI.

THough my head was full of my conversation with Lady Spelmer, the sight of Richard, who was in the anti-chamber, put it all to the rout. I remembered nothing but that he was there, and that he was an exceedingly pretty fellow.

“This will not do,” said I to myself.

And I went into my dining-room; ashamed to have bestowed one thought upon him.—That thought, however, remaining in my mind, and threatening to fix its abode there, in spite of reason and philosophy, I resolved to get rid of the cause of it. I rang the bell; Richard came.

“I have no need, Richard, of a constant attendance—keep with the people below—this will give you an agreeable
P 4. dissipation.—

dissipation. — I will ring when I want you."

"Lord, Ma'am, it is so far from here to below, that before I can come up, you may forget what you want."

"May I?"

And I burst into laughter.

"I will take care, Richard, to remember it. — Go; I have at present no need of you."

"My Lady, Ma'am, will be angry with me."

"She shall not be angry with you. — Go." —

"Very well, Ma'am."

And he went away.

When he had left the anti-chamber, I felt my heart more easy. Would you, young women, remove the principle of a pleasing sensation, as readily as you do remove that of a painful one, you never would repent the fatal consequences of it.

A passion,

A passion, at its beginning, has hardly any strength—it yields easily to the dictates of reason.—If you tenderly cherish it in your breast, you give it a power, against which you, at last, employ in vain the weapons of honour and religion. A handsome young fellow, especially of that turn of innocence which encourages our indiscretions, ought to be always kept at a great distance. Such a creature is the more dangerous, as we seldom observe before him the rules of modesty; and are often tempted to try what effect our charms may have upon his benumbed senses. If that curiosity generally forms our attitudes, when we are with men of an exquisite sensibility, what woman will silence it, when it may be productive of a greater triumph for her vanity?

Having no occasion for the services of Richard, and the prudence of not inventing any, I saw him no longer, except

transitorily. And though I saw him always with pleasure, that pleasure being unattended with reflections and reveries, I soon lived free from the fear with which he had inspired me. Nothing was wanting to my happiness, but to hear of Amelia's marriage. The fortnight was already elapsed, when, to my unspeakable joy, I received the following letter from Mr. S——.

“Lovely Ramsay,

“Before you came to Mrs. P——’s, Amelia was like gold in the ore, of no known value, till you taught her her worth. You have reclaimed a coquette, and made her sensible of her follies! You may boast the most wonderful miracle that ever was operated—Amelia, restored to her reason, was worthy of my esteem—I have paid the debts of love and honour—She is my wife—and I glory
in

in the name of her husband. I confirm the one hundred pounds annuity Amelia promised to settle upon you. At all times, lovely Ramsay, command your sincere admirer and friend:

“Ch. S——.”

“God be praised!” exclaimed I; “Amelia has got a husband—and I am free.”

I imparted the happy news to Lady Spelmer, who rejoiced in the good fortune of Amelia, and complimented me upon the annuity. That annuity I resolved to present to my mother, who, with it, would live free from care and business. It was my pleasure, as much as my duty, to spread flowers upon the remaining days of her life.

Reflections upon the past incidents of my life, united to the study of the greatest philosophers of the age, and to my daily

conversations with Lady Spelmer, Lady B——, and several men of superior merit, gave me, by degrees, an intellect so much the reverse of what I had formerly possessed, that I was like a new being, coming into a new world. From *London* to *Pekin*, from *Pekin* to *Lima*, every nation passed in review before me—I saw men actuated every where by the same passions. But as I passed from one climate into another, from a despotic to an aristocratical or republican government, I saw them differ in their legislative and religious creeds, as much as in their manners, customs, colours, and modes of worship. They all had a religion instituted by a God, who had condescended, or did still condescend, to come, now and then, among them—That religion was attended by the usual numerous train of prophets, apostles, miracles, and martyrs.—And every person believed himself in the right,
and

and his neighbour in the wrong. Far from wondering at the variety of the forms under which mankind appeared, I thought it necessary and indispensable. Why should Nature have composed but one species of men, when she had so magnificently diversified the rest of her creatures?—That variety demonstrated to me, the infinite power of God, who, to the same lump of matter, could give millions of characters, almost a contrast to each other. As the consequences I drew from the existence of so many different kinds of men, who seemed to have an origin peculiar to themselves, and of so many different religious sects, which, almost all over the world, were more calculated to consecrate the tyranny of the princes, and the ambition of the priests, than to contribute to the happiness of mankind, were sometimes extremely bold, I communicated my doubts to my mother,

who was then settled in London, and to the secret committee, *for rectifying human errors*, appointed by Lady Spelmer.

The decisions of that committee, and my constant habit of reflection, could not deaden my feelings—My sensibility could not be satisfied with arguments—It was not in my power to hate the man who offered to my senses the image of the emotions I felt. Richard, that object of my disdain, had, I knew not how, metamorphosed himself into a graceful *Adonis*.—He no longer approached me without the looks of sentiment, and the desire of pleasing me. Those looks and that desire vanished from his countenance, whenever any body interfered between him and me. In spite of myself, I had taken notice of the wondrous alteration in his manners and behaviour—and been tempted to do myself the honour of it. Richard was the admiration of the whole family, who
esteemed

esteemed him the more, as he had not appeared intitled to their esteem. My Lord and my Lady were profuse in their praises of him—And two of her Ladyship's waiting-women, who were extremely pretty, had already had some quarrels upon his account. A servant! pride and folly, women, will make a difference between Richard and a Lord—But, at my age, and with my sensibility, and with the charms with which Nature had graced him, he was a God who came before me, only to warm my breast with the sensations of pleasure. Women of my feelings, are like men of genius; their number is so inconsiderable—their flights so much out of the common track of vulgar passions, that their errors cannot be imitative. Richard, to the eye of the libertine, would have appeared but a handsome young man—To me, he appeared the child of the impression I had made upon him—

him—Without it, I thought he would have continued to be, at the same time, a spring of delight and contempt. Considering him as my work, reason could not prevail over vanity, supported by a real inclination—the more real, as I had, fifteen months, struggled sincerely to get rid of it. Richard was perpetually in my apartment, never at a loss for a pretence to make himself either useful or agreeable. And his presence grew so pleasing, and seemed to signify so little, that he had fifty opportunities to admire charms, which would have made any other man pant after the enjoyment of them.

Lady B—— had read in my heart, and given me advice—relative only to the consequences of an intimacy with Richard.—Advice she had followed ever since she had been a widow—ever since philosophy had taught her, that a rational woman ought, in the actions concerning her honour,

nour, to comply with the prejudices of the vulgar.

Was I armed sufficiently with her theory, to venture my reputation in the arms of Richard? Fear helped my reason. Did I love Richard? Was I not under the sway of an illusion, created by his captivating figure? Did not my senses command my heart? I enquired into that heart—and found there a want which was an enemy to virtue.—The reader will, perhaps, wonder at my esteem for virtue, after having shewn so great a contempt for it in my first voluptuous excursions.—My situation was no longer that of the poor, ignorant, conceited, and meanly vain Fanny Ramsay.—Independency and knowledge had made me proud—Out of pride I would, if possible, persevere in the path of virtue—Though I might consider the practice, or the neglect of it, of no importance to my happiness or misery.

CHAP. LXII.

WE went, for the summer season, to Belvoir Castle, in Suffex. The country air is impregnated with love.—The perfume of the flowers; the green solitary arbors; the tender, languishing song of the birds; the soft murmuring of a spring, which lulls every thought to rest.—The heat of the day—the coolness of the night.—How could chastity be made a virtue, when irresistible temptations incessantly attempt the destruction of it!

Whether these temptations worked upon the heart of Richard, as warmly as they did upon mine, I know not—but he had hardly breathed the fatal, corrupted air, when his sighs and behaviour plainly declared he adored me. Every morning he brought me a nosegay. Once I was still in my bed, when he entered my room.

“For—

"Forgive, Madam, I thought you were up."

And he turned to the door—then to me again.

"Did not you call, Madam?"

I smiled.

"Shall I give you this nosegay, Madam?"

"Do, Richard—But no—Lay it upon that table."

He would not hear the last command; and came to me.

How rapturously he gazed upon the disorder of my dress!—and, indeed, it was but just what a voluptuary would call decent.

I feigned not to perceive the confusion he was in—and sat upon the bed to receive the flowers. Richard was too young, and too amorous, to wait for my leave to pay his homage to my bosom, whose charms I seemed to abandon to his raptures. Fervent in his devotion, he would

would soon have forced my soul to unite with his in the praises of pleasure, had it not, on a sudden, come into my mind, that my foible was unworthy of a philosopher.—That thought was not rational—yet it gained such an empire over me, that it instantly cooled my feelings, and made me wonder at Richard's presumptuous behaviour.

“What do you mean?” exclaimed I.
 “Do not you rely too much on my good-nature?—Leave me—This very moment leave me.”

From the patience with which I had suffered his caresses, to my dislike of them, the transition had been so easy and rapid, that Richard fancied he had abused the defenceless situation I was in.—And that to fear and surprise, he had been solely indebted for the apparent encouragement I had given him. He apologized for his conduct, promised to offend no more, and
 left

left me, amazed at the extraordinary caprice that had preserved my virtue.

The victory, I had so unexpectedly got, was, as unexpectedly, followed by indifference. My heart was as calm, as if the spirit of love had never created its impulse. I thought of Richard—and his plea was immediately lost in the exultations of my pride, which fed luxuriously upon my triumph over him. Was it possible I had not loved Richard! I could not believe it. He had been above fifteen months the object of my anxiety.—He only had intruded in the midst of my studies—in the midst of my philosophical thoughts—in the midst of my pleasures.—His image had followed me every where—and yet a silly reflection had prevailed over my sensibility, inflamed by his transports! As this was one of those events my weak reason could not explain, I resolved to lay it, under fictitious names, before

before our secret committee, for their opinion upon such an unprecedented whim of the human heart.

Some days after, Lord and Lady Spelmer were invited to a ball, at the Duke of N——'s. Her Ladyship, who always would have me share in her pleasures, took me with her to his Grace's. It seems as if Fate had, on purpose, created for me, a singularity of events. All the transactions of my life had constantly been under the influence of original circumstances.—From Sir George Lendal to Richard, there had been an oddity in my principles and affections—in my defeats and triumphs—and in the good and evil that had befallen me.

We had just come into the room, where the company were assembled, when a gentleman exclaimed——

“Frank, that is the Lady I have spoken to you of—the Lady I have looked in
vain

vain for, these eighteen months past. Oh! I shall die through too much joy—Support me—I faint!”

The loud, indiscreet exclamation fixed every eye upon me.

“Are you, Fanny, the object of that exclamation?” said Lady Spelmer.

“Upon honour, my Lady, I do not know who made it—the voice of the man is entirely unknown to me.”

As the last words of the gentleman had really been followed by a swoon, and the throng about him was very considerable, it was but a few minutes after, when he was conveyed into another apartment, that I knew him to be Sir Henry Fentam, whom I had so particularly distinguished, the first time I had been at the opera. The pleasure of seeing me, made so violent an impression upon his spirits, that they forcibly sunk; and he was carried away, almost inanimate, in the arms of his friends.—

The

The sable of death was spread upon his face.—

“I know that gentleman,” said I to Lady Spelmer—“I wish I had not come here!—This is a very extraordinary accident!”

The concern the company felt for Sir Henry, was not adequate to their desire of knowing me. Curiosity in women will always get the better of sentiment. Had not their respect for Lady Spelmer forced them to be discreet, their foolish tongues would, certainly, have plagued me, with a thousand impertinent questions.

Lord Spelmer, who had followed Sir Henry, came to us.

“Betray no concern, Miss Ramsay,” said he to me.—“I have secured the discretion of Sir Henry’s friends.—Be the consequences what they will, either they will turn to your advantage, or no body shall positively affirm you are the cause
of

of them, unless you prefer to modelly, the reputation of having brought your lover to the grave."

"What! my Lord, are there no hopes of him?"

"His Grace's phyfician pretends he cannot live three hours longer—An excess of joy has given his heart a mortal contraction, which it is not in the power of art to cure. Had you any esteem for him?"

"I never saw him but once—Never have I exchanged one word with Sir Henry."

"Amazing, upon my honour!" exclaimed his Lordship. "Sir Henry's passion confounds my reason—He saw you but once—and it is eighteen months ago—yet he loves you to that degree, as not to be able to enjoy, calmly, the pleasure of seeing you!—This is as romantic a

passion as I ever heard of.—But here is the Duke.”

“His Grace begged leave of the company to put off the entertainment to another day, as Sir Henry Fentam lay at the point of death in his house. That intelligence threw the whole company into the utmost confusion.

“At the point of death!”

Though that exclamation was almost universal—I am sorry to say it—it did not so much proceed from humanity, from an interest in the situation of Sir Henry, as from the disappointment of a night's favourite entertainment.

“How unseasonably was Sir Henry taken ill!”

“Why should his illness disturb our pleasures? I had a better opinion of the Duke's politeness and gallantry.”

I turned my head to see the unfeeling wretches,

wretches, who had betrayed their want of pity and decency—Two young coquettes!—Indignation was in my looks—They were too bold to be awed with that sentiment—Instead of a blush, they repaid it with peals of laughter.

While the company were filing off to their carriages, the Duke took my Lady and me into a drawing-room, where we found her Lord, and two gentlemen, with whom I was perfectly acquainted.

How astonishing and unlucky this adventure!" said Lord P——. "Sir Henry Fentam, our intimate friend, was looking all over the world for you, Miss, when, at the same time, we were almost every day in your company at Lord Spelmer's. Every hour we spent with him, he was perpetually talking of you, and describing your person; yet it never came into our minds that you were the woman he loved.

Mr. R——, who was at the opera with you, did ungenerously deceive him—he gave him a false name, and a false direction—and, when, after a fruitless enquiry, Sir Henry applied to him again, Mr. R—— had the meanness to tell him you were gone to the East Indies. We tried every art to make him forget you—your image, lovely Miss Ramsay, was too deeply rooted in his heart.—It was with the greatest difficulty we could prevent his following you to the East Indies.—Had you known him, you would have done justice to his merit—He has every virtue, every quality, that can captivate the heart, and seduce the reason of a sensible woman. Your presence, at the moment he had lost all hopes of ever seeing you, overpowered his frame—He sunk under the load of an intolerable joy—He breathes yet, and knows he has not
 long

long to live. Unfortunate Sir Henry! how deplorable his fate!—He dies, when fortune seems to repent her injustice, and willing to make him happy!”

Though my inclination for Sir Henry Fentam had been but momentary, I remembered he had been the peculiar object of my attention.—The peculiar cause of my dislike to Mr. R——; that he had often and often given the impulse to my heart.—The pathetic speech of Lord P—— reviving the past in my memory, I could not help shedding some tears.

“How precious those tears!” exclaimed Lord P——. “He shall know you have pitied his fate—It will be a comfort to his agonizing soul, to know you have shed a tear over him. Step, my dear M——, to Sir Henry—Tell him the sorrow of Miss Ramsay—Tell him she is worthy of the resolution he has formed—

You are the thought of his last moments, lovely Ramsay.—Sir Henry is actually making a Will in your favour.”

“In my favour, my Lord! Sir Henry does not know me.—I will not accept of a fortune which cannot be mine without injustice—without injuring the lawful heirs to it. Of such favours, my Lord, I have no need.”

“Such favours, Miss, Sir Henry may grant without injustice; he has a considerable personal estate, which he can dispose of at his pleasure, and which his Grace, my Lord and my Lady, will tell you, you may accept, with honour to yourself.”

“Has he no poor relations?”

The duke turned upon his heels, shrugging his shoulders, with an air that signified—“O! the fool, the fool!”

Lord P——, after having stared a few minutes

minutes at me, took Lord Spelmer to the window.

“What have you done with your good sense, Fanny?” said Lady Spelmer; you know the world, and yet dare to refuse ten thousand a year! Do you hope to deserve the esteem of the public, and of Sir Henry’s poor relations, by your disinterestedness? Such a blunder from a woman of your sagacity! fy!

“Will the caprice of Sir Henry, my Lady, oblige several families to curse him and me?”

“Will their curses plague him when he is dead, or deprive you of your taste, knowledge, sensibility, and happiness, whilst you are living? What man or woman is not every day the object of an enemy’s curse? The poor, Fanny, will always curse people in prosperity, be they ever so virtuous, humane, and benevolent.

Curfes are the confolation of the vulgar, as flander is the confolation of the women who are not favoured with beauty. With the fortune of Sir Henry, you will have it in your power to do good to his poor relations, if there be any—and to give a loofe to the generofity of your difpofition.”

“Riches may corrupt my heart, and make me infenfible of another’s mifery.—Did I think they would have that effect upon me, I would rather pafs publicly for a fool, than be deprived of the efteem of myfelf. The hope of making a good ufe of Sir Henry’s fortune, filences all my feruples, my Lord,” faid I to Lord P——, who had drawn near us with Lord Spelmer.

“I admire your condefcenfion,” answered Lord P——, with a fmile that did not fpeak the panegyric of my candour.—“It is certainly very kind in you,

not

not to refuse a present of ten thousand a year."

"I have no affectation in my manners, my Lord—My heart is a stranger to avarice; it cherishes no other passion than that of being esteemed by men of your merit. I sincerely wish I were not the object of Sir Henry's liberality."

Upon my desire of pleasing you, Reader! I swear I spoke the truth.

"Forgive, Madam," said Lord P—

"In the world we see so little of your delicacy of sentiments, that I did not hesitate to think you were an hypocrite. How happy would my friend have been with a woman of your character! You were born for each other—But Fate has ordered it otherwise.—He must die."

"But, my Lord, since Sir Henry loves me, why did he not desire to see me?"

"It is because he loves you, that he feared

feared your presence would deprive him of the little strength of which he is still possessed.—Love made him prudent—He would first secure you his fortune.—When his will is made he will see you. M—— comes.”

“Sir Henry has made his will, and put it in the hands of his Grace, whom, with you and me, he has named his executor.—His strength diminishes considerably.—Though he has a perfect knowledge of what he does, he can hardly speak.—We have no time to lose.—Sir Henry waits impatiently for Miss Ramsay—Have you told her his intention?”

No—But I will this very minute. Miss Ramsay, Sir Henry will die with the name of your husband—with that name he will not fear death—For his sake, as much as for your own, consent to become his wife.—That character will confirm your title

to his fortune.—Let not my friend, and your benefactor, leave this life with sorrow.—Come, the time is precious.”

“O! my Lady, my Lady!” exclaimed I, leaning upon the bosom of her Ladyship, “what shall I do?”

“Be just and humane, dear Fanny—I will say no more.”

“You have said enough.—Gentlemen, I will follow you.”

C H A P. LXIII.

REader, give me leave not to describe the dismal scene.—Though without love for Sir Henry, pity and gratitude made me share in the wretchedness of his situation.—See him upon his death-bed, in the prime of life—like a beautiful rose blasted by an envious wind.—Joy glistened in his eyes at the sight of me—he would speak, but death was near his heart—he could only tender a cold, trembling hand, and pronounce the Yes, that made him my husband.—Half an hour after, I was a widow.

My grief for the death of an husband, with whom I had not been acquainted, could neither be violent nor lasting—Had I even shown any, beyond what the decorum of my situation obliged me to affect, the world would have justly challenged

lenged my sincerity.—I did not chuse to put them to that trouble. The Duke of N——, and the two other executors, put me in possession of Sir Henry's estates; and I had the singular happiness of finding no relations of that gentleman, who could, rationally, envy the preference he had given me over them.

The brilliant fortune I enjoyed, did not tempt me to launch into the ocean of dissipation and folly.—I grew still more fond of my usual exercises, of a solitary life, and of the society of my former friends. My mother and sister lived with me.—The latter had so happily profited by the instructions of her masters, that there were few accomplishments, either agreeable or useful, with which she was not graced. Her merit captivated the honourable Mr. M——; she seemed equally sensible of his good qualities—A few words from each of the lovers, telling me the mutual

esteem they had one for another, I consented to their happiness. Never was marriage more happy—Formed by love it is still to them, after twelve years of enjoyment, a spring of the most rational delights.

By the most unaccountable events, I found myself, before I was yet twenty years old, a *maid, wife, and widow!* To these characters I may add that of philosopher—That of an enemy to pride and flattery—That of a friend to men of genius and merit. What an alteration had fortune successively made in my mind, in my heart, in my circumstances! —

“What became of my sensibility? Reader! regulated by philosophy, it became the slave of my reason.”

F I N I S.

